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Iraq's Insurgency and the Road to Civil Conflict

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Anthony H. Cordesman
With assistance from Emma R. Davies

Iraq's Insurgency and the Road to Civil Conflict

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Chronology of Major Events in Iraq: May 1, 2003–June 2007

April–May 2003	There is widespread looting in Baghdad and a sharp increase in low-level criminal activity. The U.S. military does not have sufficient forces to control the breakdown in security. The lack of a phase IV plan becomes apparent.
May 1, 2003	President George W. Bush declares an end to major combat operations in Iraq.
May 12, 2003	Ambassador L. Paul Bremer arrives in Iraq and establishes the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). He replaces Ret. Lt. Gen. Jay Garner, head of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance for Iraq. Soon after arriving Bremer issues CPA Order Number 1, De-Ba'athification of Iraq, and CPA Order Number 2, Dissolution of Entities.
Summer 2003	The United States denies that the insurgency is a guerrilla war and emphasizes that the attacks come from former regime elements and "bitter enders." USCENTCOM (United States Central Command) Commander Gen. Tommy Franks retires, and Gen. John Abizaid takes command. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez becomes commander of U.S. forces in Iraq.
August 7, 2003	A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens.
August 19, 2003	A truck bomb explodes outside UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing 24 people, including the head of the UN

mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello. More than 100 are injured. The dead also include the Iraqi coordinator for the UN children's fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers. This attack, and the attack on the Jordanian Embassy, was later attributed to al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia associates.

November 15, 2003 The CPA and the Iraqi Governing Council reach an agreement on the "November 15 Document" that outlines a timeline for transition to Iraqi sovereignty.

December 13, 2003 Saddam Hussein is captured by American troops. The former dictator is found hiding in a hole near Tikrit, his hometown. He surrenders without a fight.

March 2, 2004 In the bloodiest day in Iraq since the end of combat operations, at least five bombs explode near Shi'ite religious ceremonies in Baghdad and Karbala, as hundreds of thousands of pilgrims pack the streets for the Ashura ceremony. At least 270 people die; 573 are wounded. It isa the first time Shi'ites are permitted to observe the holy day since the Ba'athists had taken power.

March 8, 2004 The Iraqi Governing Council reaches an agreement on an interim constitution, called the Transitional Administrative Law.

March 31, 2004 Four Blackwater USA security guards are killed in Fallujah, helping to trigger fighting between U.S. forces and insurgents in the Sunni Arab city that lasts through April. These clashes are often called the "First Battle of Fallujah."

April 4, 2004 The followers of Moqtada al-Sadr, a militant Shi'ite cleric espousing fiercely anti-American rhetoric, march through at least six Iraqi cities, seizing control of the area around Kufa and killing nine Coalition troops—seven in Sadr City alone. The violence began when demonstrations supporting Sadr and his deputy, who was arrested the previous day, clashed with Coalition forces in Najaf and in Sadr City. Clashes last until June.

June 28, 2004 The CPA transfers sovereignty to Iraq. Ayad Allawi becomes the interim Prime Minister. Soon after, Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., replaces General Sanchez as commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, and John D. Negroponte, formally the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, replaces Bremer as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq.

October 23, 2004 In the single deadliest insurgent ambush to date, guerrillas dressed as police officers execute 49 newly trained Iraqi soldiers on a remote road in eastern Iraq. The unarmed soldiers stopped at a fake checkpoint while returning home after

completing training with U.S. forces. The incident supports assertions that insurgents have infiltrated the Iraqi security infrastructure. Two days later, Prime Minister Allawi blames Coalition forces for leaving the Iraqis vulnerable to attack.

November 8, 2004 U.S. troops move into Fallujah, engaging in intense fighting with insurgents for over a week. Most of the insurgents involved are either killed or captured. This fighting is often called the "Second Battle of Fallujah."

January 30, 2005 Nationwide elections take place for a National Assembly that was tasked with writing a draft constitution. Most provinces also held elections for provincial councils. The majority of Sunnis boycotted the election. Violence had steadily increased leading up to the elections.

May 2005 A tape attributed to al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi effectively declares war against the Shi'ites in Iraq.

June 21, 2005 Zalmay Khalilzad is sworn in as the new U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, replacing Negroponte.

September 14, 2005 A dozen bombings in nine hours rock Baghdad, killing more than 150 Iraqis and wounding several hundred. It is Baghdad's worst day of bloodshed since the war began. The deadliest attack occurs in the Khadamiya district, a Shi'ite neighborhood in northern Baghdad, when an insurgent detonated his van near a crowd of day laborers, killing 112 and wounding 200 more.

October 15, 2005 Iraqis vote in a "yes" or "no" referendum to accept the draft constitution. Sunnis overwhelmingly reject the draft, but it passes with Shi'ite and Kurdish support.

December 15, 2005 Iraq holds nationwide elections for a permanent government. There are a few incidents involving light violence, but no major attacks. Sunni participation is much higher than in the January election. The Shi'ite coalition, the United Iraqi Alliance, wins the majority of seats in the proportional representation election and has the responsibility to select a prime minister. Ibrahim al-Ashaiqir al-Jaafari continues on in that position as the various Shi'ite parties debate.

January 2006 The Mujahedeen Shura Council, an insurgent umbrella group that unifies several neo-Salafi elements under the leadership of al-Qa'ida, is created.

February 22, 2006 The 1,200-year-old Shi'ite Askariya shrine in Samarra, Iraq, is attacked. The bombing destroys the golden-domed shrine, which was one of the most sacred for Iraqi Shi'ites. Al-Qa'ida

in Iraq claims responsibility for the attack. This sets off an unprecedented spasm of sectarian violence. At least 47 bodies of both Shi'ites and Sunnis are found across Iraq the following day, and dozens of Sunni mosques are attacked.

March 2, 2006 U.S. Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch confirms that since the Golden Mosque bombing there have been 33 attacks on mosques, with two destroyed and seven sustaining significant damage, 319 Iraqi civilians have been killed in street violence, and 21 protests have taken place with over 1,000 people, the majority of which were peaceful.

May 20, 2006 The government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki takes power. A bomb explodes in Sadr City, killing 19 and wounding 58. In Qaim, 25 Sunni farmers are seized by a Shi'ite militia in reprisal attacks. These types of retaliatory killings are typical after the Samarra mosque bombing. Between 10 and 40 Iraqis continue to be found dead on the streets in Iraq daily.

June 7, 2006 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is killed in a U.S. airstrike in Diyala Province. Abu Ayyub al-Masri is named his successor shortly thereafter.

June 14, 2006 U.S. and Iraqi forces commence Operation Forward Together in Baghdad. This operation consists of about 70,000–75,000 men.

October 2006 The "Islamic State of Iraq," an extension of the Mujahedeen Shura Council that claims territory in Sunni-dominated Iraq, is created.

The "National Awakening Council" is formed in Anbar by tribal sheiks who seek to form an alliance with Coalition forces against al-Qa'ida.

January 10, 2007 President Bush and Prime Minister al-Maliki announce a "New Way Forward" in Iraq. The new strategy includes sending some 20,000 additional U.S. troops to Iraq, the majority of which will be "surged" to Baghdad. Soon after, Gen. David H. Petraeus takes command of Multinational Force–Iraq (MNF-I) from General Casey; Adm. William J. Fallon takes command of CENTCOM, replacing General Abizaid; and Ryan Crocker becomes the new U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, replacing Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad.

February 13, 2007 The Baghdad security plan, or "Operation Fardh al-Qanoon," is initiated, although the full U.S. "surge" strength does not arrive until June.

June 2007 U.S. and Iraqi troops are deployed to areas surrounding Baghdad and throughout the country in what becomes

known as "Operation Phantom Thunder." The operations are meant to eliminate car-bomb factories and insurgent cells in the Baghdad "belt." Operation Phantom Thunder includes Operation Fardh al-Qanoon in Baghdad, Operation Arrowhead Ripper in Diyala, and Operation Marne Torch in Maysan.

U.S. and Iraqi troops recruit tribal groups and local insurgents to fight against al-Qa'ida throughout the country.

Source: UN, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2004.

Map of Iraq

1

Introduction

The insurgency in Iraq has become a "war after the war" that has triggered far broader patterns of civil conflict that threaten to divide the country and create a full-scale civil conflict. It has triggered a mix of sectarian and ethnic violence that has dominated the struggle to reshape Iraq as a modern state, emerged as a growing threat to the Gulf region, and that may trigger a broader struggle between Sunni and Shi'ite Islamist extremism, and moderation and reform, throughout the Islamic world.

The first elements of the Sunni Arab insurgency and efforts to create sectarian violence emerged almost immediately after the U.S. invasion in 2003 and steadily increased with time. By 2004, the insurgency had already evolved into a war of attrition that produced ten times as many Coalition casualties as the fight to topple the Regime and defeat Iraq's army. Many factions came to threaten Iraqi security and stability as the war after the war continued. By 2005, however, the Sunni Arab insurgency came to be dominated by Islamist extremists who opposed negotiations or arrangements with the new Iraqi government and compromise with Coalition forces. These extremists focused on attacking Shi'ite Arabs, Kurds, and those Sunni Arabs who supported the new government and Coalition forces. They continued to attack Coalition, diplomatic, nongovernmental, and other non-Iraqi targets. The insurgents also still sought to force the United States and its allies to withdraw from Iraq and to defeat them in a war of attrition, although their primary goal had evolved into preventing Iraq from emerging as a unified national state dominated by a Shi'ite Arab majority.

By late 2005, civil conflicts and sectarian and ethnic violence had spread throughout Iraq. Shi'ite Arab militias and death squads now replied to the insurgency in kind, often killing, wounding, or kidnapping innocent Sunnis. Neighborhood forces both protected and threatened. Ethnic cleansing forced many Iraqis to relocate into areas where they were in the sectarian or ethnic majority or flee the country. Shi'ite

Arab and Kurdish elements in the security forces and police joined in the pattern of revenge and violence of the Sunni insurgents, while tensions grew between Iraq's Kurds and both its Shi'ite and Sunni Arabs.

From this point on, there was less and less difference between insurgency and civil conflict, and all sides were to some extent guilty of terrorism. The fighting in Iraq had evolved in ways that increased the risk of intense or full-scale civil war. The war after the war was driven by sectarian and ethnic struggles, rather than by national movements and ideological causes, and in some cases by internal struggles for power within the same sect. Shi'ite versus Shi'ite tensions and clashes became steadily more serious in the south, Sunni tribal elements clashed with Islamist movements like al-Qa'ida, and Kurds, Arabs, and other minorities competed for territory and influence in the north.

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S "POWDER KEG"

The United States and its Coalition allies must take much of the blame for the way the insurgency unfolded after the spring of 2003, but it seems almost certain that the fall of Saddam Hussein would have exposed deep fracture lines in Iraq, almost regardless of how the end of his regime occurred. Arab Sunni rule over an Arab Shi'ite majority was a key legacy of both the Ottoman Empire and the British "divide and rule" tactics that formed the Iraqi state. The forced inclusion of the Kurds in Iraq, British suppression of a largely Shi'ite rebellion, and the British choice of an expatriate Sunni monarch helped reinforce Sunni control at the expense of the Shi'ites and the Kurds. So did the violent suppression of repeated Kurdish uprisings.

Iraq's violent modern politics further compounded these sectarian and ethnic problems. Although Shi'ites and Kurds did play a role in Iraq's postmonarchy politics, most power struggles were between rival Sunni elites. The defeat of yet another Kurdish rebellion in the mid-1970s helped cement suppression of rival sectarian and ethnic factions by force. So did Saddam's rise to power. He never tolerated political dissent in any form and began the bloody purging and suppression of all organized political resistance when he took full power in 1979.

Under Saddam, Iraq came to be ruled by a small, largely rural Sunni Arab elite that used the Ba'ath Party and the state to maintain its power. Its economy remained relatively undeveloped; agriculture was never properly modernized or made productive, inefficient state industries undercut development, as did a rigid state-controlled financial sector and a mix of barriers to trade and outside investment. Worse, the economy effectively became a command kleptocracy where Saddam Hussein used the nation's wealth to secure power and support his ambitions, and his ruling elite exploited their positions for their own personal benefit.

THE HISTORY OF IRAQI SHI'ITE TENSIONS WITH THE HUSSEIN REGIME AND THE SUNNIS

There is no easy way to summarize the complex history of the various clashes and incidents that helped shape patterns of violence between Shi'ites and Sunnis. In brief,

Iraq's conversion to Shi'ite beliefs occurred largely as a result of the Afghan conquest of Iran in the early 1700s. While the expansion of Shi'ism in Iraq was delayed by the Saudi Wahhabi conquest of Karbala in 1801 and the seizure of Najaf in 1805, Turkey reconquered the area in 1843 and made an effort to convert the then largely nomadic Sunni tribes to stable, agricultural settlers. Turkey gave Iranian Shi'ite scholars special status in 1875, and mass conversions took place through much of the nineteenth century.

A more modern form of Shi'ite Arab political consciousness began to emerge around 1900, and Shi'ite religious scholars (*mujtahids*) played a major role after the defeat of the Turks in 1918. They, along with the Sayyids, played a chief role in the revolt against the British in 1920. These Shi'ite political forces quickly had to adapt to the fact the revolt was put down (Winston Churchill used the Royal Air Force and poison gas), and a Sunni Hashemite king, Emir Faisal ibn Husayn, was installed by the British, along with a Sunni-dominated elite.

Shi'ite lawyers and mujtahids petitioned the king for greater rights and investment in 1935. The Hashemite king and dominant Sunni elite, however, ignored these pressures and concentrated development in the north at the expense of the Shi'ite south. This brought many Shi'ites into Baghdad, where some estimates put them at 50 percent of the population in the capital in this period. At the same time, the development of Basra as a port led Sunnis to settle there.

Shi'ites played a major role in the Iraqi Communist Party after the fall of the king, but generally moved away from it in the 1960s, after it became clear that it did little to help them. On the other hand, the Ba'ath Party was clearly a Sunni party and always had trouble coopting Shi'ites. The Ba'ath also drove thousands of Shi'ites into Iran in the 1970s and began to execute prominent Shi'ite leaders whom it regarded as disloyal after the fall of the Shah. During the Iran-Iraq War—from 1980–1988—many Iraqi Shi'ites had to make a hard choice between a secular, career-oriented life in the Ba'ath or exile and religion. The fact Iranians were banned from Shi'ite religious cities during the Iran-Iraq War hurt the economy in the south, and Saddam's regime continued to favor the north and the Sunnis. Saddam rose to power in a bloodless coup in 1968. He shared power with Ahmad Hussan al-Bakr, but by 1969 he was clearly in charge.

Popular uprisings took place in the south after Iraq's defeat in 1991. They were crushed by March, in part because of resentment of Iranian efforts to intervene and distrust of efforts to make the uprisings religious. After that time, Saddam waged a low-level civil war against Shi'ite opponents in the south, drained the marsh area to bring them under control, and killed several leading Shi'ite leaders. These include the Ayatollah Ali Al-Gharavi in 1998, Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr in 1998, and Hussein Bahr al-Uloom in 2001.

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

The nation was impoverished and driven into massive debt in the early 1980s by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran and his effort to seize its oil-rich territory in the

southwest of Iran. While most of Iraq's Shi'ites and many of its Kurds remained loyal to the government, some did not. Shi'ite dissidents were ruthlessly punished, and the Kurds whose loyalty was uncertain or tilted toward Iran were attacked, relocated, and often killed. Many Kurdish and Shi'ite conscripts were assigned to Iraq's low-grade infantry units, often acting as little more than a forward defensive shield for Iraq's Republican Guard and main regular army units.

The politics of the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980–1988, were essentially the politics of ruthless repression that particularly focused on Shi'ites and Kurds. Political dissent of any kind became even more dangerous. Kurdish efforts to exploit the war and achieve some degree of autonomy or independence were met with murder, the use of poison gas, and "ethnic cleansing." Hundreds of thousands of Arab Shi'ites were driven out of the country, and many formed an armed opposition with Iranian support. While most of the remaining Arab Shi'ites remained loyal, their secular and religious leaders were kept under constant surveillance and sometimes imprisoned and killed. The marsh areas along the Iranian border were a key center of the fighting between Iran and Iraq, but still became a sanctuary for deserters and Shi'ite opposition elements.

Eight years of war crippled the development of the nation's economy, infrastructure, education, and efforts to properly develop its oil wealth. In the process, Shi'ite and Kurdish regions took far more serious cuts in civil spending than the major cities and "loyal" Sunni areas.

THE GULF WAR AND ITS IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

In 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in an effort to solve his economic problems by seizing its oil resources. The result was the Gulf War, a massive military defeat for Iraq, a new burden of reparations for the war, and more than a decade of UN and international sanctions that further crippled every aspect of the nation's development.

Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War in 1991 did more than further impoverish the country. Uprisings in the Shi'ite areas in the south were suppressed with all of the regime's customary violence and then followed by a mix of repression and low-level civil war that lasted until Saddam was driven from power. While this conflict received only limited attention from the outside world, it often involved significant local clashes between Iraqi government forces and those of Shi'ite opposition movements based in, and backed by, Iran. The post-Gulf War discovery of mass graves of Shi'ite fighters and civilians is a grim testimony to how serious this "quiet" fighting had been. This further divided Shi'ites and Sunnis and left a lasting legacy of anger against the United States and Britain for not supporting the Shi'ite uprisings against Saddam and protecting the Shi'ites from the Regime's reprisal attacks.

A similar set of uprisings in the Kurdish north created a flood of refugees into Turkey following the defeat of the Kurds. This forced the United States to use airpower to protect the Kurds and create an international aid effort to support them. This gave the Kurds a level of protection the Arab Shi'ites lacked, but left them in a kind of

limbo where they had *de facto* autonomy, but lived with nearly one-third of Iraq's military forces deployed on the edge of their "security zone." Divisions between the two main Kurdish factions led to low-level fighting and even to one faction supporting an attack by Saddam on the other. The end result, however, was to further increase the Kurdish desire for independence, while keeping many dispossessed Kurds out of their original homes in areas like Kirkuk and Mosul.[1]

1991 TO THE U.S.–LED INVASION

From 1991 until the Coalition invasion in 2003, Saddam Hussein created further problems for Iraq by encouraging tribal divisions and favoring those tribes and clans that supported his rule and regime. He exploited religion by increasingly publicly embracing Islam and privately favoring Sunni factions and religious leaders who supported him, while penalizing Shi'ite religious leaders and centers he saw as threats.

At the same time, funds were poured into Sunni areas in the west, government and security jobs were given to Sunnis, and scarce resources went into military industries that heavily favored Sunni employment. The result was to distort the economy and the urban structure of Iraq in ways that favored Sunni towns and cities in areas like Tikrit, Samarra, Fallujah, Ramadi, and other largely loyalist Sunni towns; deepen sectarian tensions; and prepare the groundwork for civil war.

Saddam Hussein's regime manipulated rationing, control of imports, and state funds. Saddam corrupted the UN oil for food program for his own benefit, further undercutting economic development, causing serious human hardship, and crippling part of the country's infrastructure and medical services.

The funding of education, medical services, and infrastructure was used as a political weapon in an effort to exploit the suffering of the Iraqi people to break out of UN sanctions. Revenues were used selectively to favor key power centers like Baghdad, and major potential centers of urban unrest, while leaving other areas with limited or no essential services like water, power, and sewers.

Rather than seek to restore and develop the nation's oil and gas wealth, existing fields were overproduced, funds were redirected for the use of the regime, and exports were manipulated to obtain kickbacks and get political support from nations such asSyria. These efforts were cloaked by a propaganda campaign blaming the United States, the UN, outside powers, and sanctions for all of the mistakes of the regime.

Iraq's ethnic and sectarian fracture lines were rarely openly apparent, but tensions between the Sunni-dominated ruling elite and the Shi'ites and Kurds became steadily worse in the 1990s. The isolation of the Kurdish security zone heightened Kurdish demands for autonomy or independence. The economic gaps between the elite and ordinary Iraqis also worsened, as did the gap between Arab Sunnis and Shi'ites, and much of the middle class was impoverished. By comparison, Josip Broz Tito's regime in the former Yugoslavia was both progressive and benign. At the time the U.S.–led Coalition invaded, Iraq was divided by far greater pressures and had far less capability for political leadership. It was a time bomb waiting to explode, fueled by both its

original heritage of ethnic and sectarian divisions and by over 20 years of direct misrule by Saddam Hussein.

AMERICA'S STRATEGIC MISTAKES IN GOING TO WAR

The United States made major strategic mistakes in preparing to deal with this situation. It did demonstrate that it could fight the conventional war it planned to fight. It defeated Iraq's conventional forces with remarkable speed and efficiency, and at low cost. The problem was that the United States focused on conventional warfighting and driving Saddam from power and failed to look beyond the moment of military victory.

The United States failed to realistically plan for and then execute three other phases of war: conflict termination, stability operations, and nation building. It did not prepare for counterinsurgency or for the efforts necessary to reduce the risk of civil conflict. The United States chose a strategy whose postconflict goals were unrealistic and impossible to achieve, and it failed to plan for the real nature of "peace" that was certain to follow.

The impact of these failures was compounded after Saddam's fall when it became apparent to Iraqis and to the world that the basic rationale for going to war was based on false intelligence estimates of Iraqi efforts to create weapons of mass destruction that did not exist.

Failure at the Grand Strategic Level

The worst American mistakes were made at the grand strategic level. The Bush administration and the senior leadership of the U.S. military made the mistake of wishing away virtually all of the real-world problems in stability operations and nation building and making massive policy and military errors that created much of the climate that allowed the insurgency in Iraq to emerge.

In *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq,* Michael R. Gordon and Gen. Bernard E. Trainor write that there "was a direct link between the way the Iraq War was planned and the bitter insurgency the American-led coalition subsequently confronted. The ambitious plans that the president announced to transform American defense proved to be at odds with his bold plan to transform a region."[2]

Too much credence was given to U.S. ideologues and true believers, and Iraqi elites with uncertain credibility and obvious self-interest, in estimating the ease with which such a war could be fought and in the lack of need for effective nation building. These included leading neoconservatives in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Office of the Vice President, and some officials in the National Security Council, as well as in several highly politicized "think tanks." The same was true of various Iraqi exile groups that grossly exaggerated the level of Iraqi popular support for a "liberating" invasion, the ease with which Saddam Hussein's regime could be

replaced, and underestimated both the scale of Iraq's ethnic and sectarian divisions and economic problems.

All these problems were further compounded by leadership within the Office of the Secretary of Defense that put intense pressure on the U.S. military to plan for the lowest possible level of U.S. military deployment and then for delays in that deployment because of the political need to avoid appearing precipitous to the UN. At the same time, the leadership of the U.S. military actively resisted planning for, and involvement in, large-scale and enduring stability and nation-building activity and failed to plan and deploy for the risk of a significant insurgency.

Failures Before and During the Initial Invasion

The situation was made worse by the fact that the United States made major mistakes in planning the way the Iraq War was fought. The Bush administration's plan for stability operations, conflict termination, and nation building chose a strategy whose goals were unrealistic and impossible to achieve, and it planned only for the war it wanted to fight and not for uncertainty and the problems in stability operations and nation building that were almost certain to follow.

The rationale for the war was equally flawed. The United States and Britain grossly overestimated the threat posed by Iraq's missiles and weapons of mass destruction—neither of which proved to pose a remaining threat.

The public case for the war was also based on intelligence assessments that are now known to have overstated the relationship between al-Qa'ida and Iraq. This resulted in part from the alternative intelligence assessment produced by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP), which was under the leadership of Douglas J. Feith. Feith's office produced intelligence on the relationship between Iraq and al-Qa'ida in 2002 and 2003 that differed from the assessment by the intelligence community, according to a review by the Inspector General, Department of Defense.

In 2002, OUSDP requested that Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) analysts conduct intelligence assessments of the relationship between Iraq and al-Qa'ida. The DIA analysts and OUSDP personnel used the same intelligence as the rest of the intelligence community, but interpreted it differently. The conclusion from OUSDP was that Iraq cooperated with al-Qa'ida at a higher level than those conclusions supported by the intelligence community. The Central Intelligence Agency, for example, found that there were "no conclusive signs of cooperation" between Iraq and al-Qa'ida.

OUSDP personnel briefed senior members of the Bush administration on the relationship between Iraq and al-Qa'ida in September 2002. The briefing used OUSDP's intelligence assessment saying that the link between Iraq and al-Qa'ida was conclusive, and it included a slide that accused the intelligence community of requiring "judicial evidence for reports, underestimating the importance for both Iraq and al-Qa'ida to keep their relationship hidden, and assuming the two would not cooperate because of religious differences." Top administration officials were

given evidence that the intelligence community did not agree was conclusive. The briefings and "conclusive" evidence provided top officials by OUSDP were used to link Iraq to al-Qa'ida in the prewar planning period.[3]

At the same time, the U.S. military did not prepare for the possibility of asymmetric war and a serious insurgency and did not plan to take preventive action as Coalition forces advanced. In *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq,* George Packer noted U.S. forces were unprepared for the growth and resilience of the insurgency they confronted following the toppling of Saddam Hussein. According to Packer's account, phase IV—or postwar operations in Iraq, was perceived as an afterthought by the Bush administration, rather than as a primary objective. Consequently, Washington turned a blind eye to developments on the ground and was to slow to react to an evolving, and potentially fatal, resistance force. Packer wrote,

> [I]n Washington there had been no plan for a guerrilla war; a guerrilla war would change all the calculations about the military presence in Iraq; and so there was no guerrilla war. On the ground in Iraq, the consequences of this willful blindness were as real and dire as the months or even years of delay in supplies of armored vehicles and body armor reaching American forces whose "operations tempo" was increasing every week. After the Army ordered more bulletproof vests, it took almost half a year for the first shipment to reach Iraq. By December 2003, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the top US Commander in Iraq, was writing to the Pentagon that the shortage of spare parts and other equipment was so severe that "I cannot continue to support combat operations with rates this low."[4]

Part of the problem was that many of the key decisions involved were made in ways that bypassed the interagency process within the U.S government, ignored the warnings of U.S. area and intelligence experts, ignored prior military war and stability planning by the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), and ignored the warnings of policy makers and experts in other key Coalition states like the United Kingdom.

As previously stated, the administration gave far too much credence to ideologues and true believers, and little attention was paid to the problems that would arise once Saddam fell from power. Book after book has confirmed the fact that leading neoconservatives in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Office of the Vice President, and some officials in the National Security Council, as well as in several highly politicized think tanks, assumed that Iraq would preserve virtually all of its existing government, require little more than the toppling of a dictator, be wealthy enough to carry out its own development, and would not present major internal security problems like ethnic and sectarian conflicts.[5]

Also as previously stated, the Office of the Secretary of Defense put intense pressure on the U.S. military to plan for the lowest possible level of U.S. military force. The United States also assumed it would get access to Turkey for an American invasion from the north that Turkey did not approve. The United States also made the following more detailed mistakes in planning and deploying for the risk of a significant insurgency:

- *Inaccurate threat estimates that created a false rationale for war.* U.S. and British intelligence made major errors in estimating the level of Iraq's programs to develop weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems. Such errors were in many ways the outgrowth of Iraq's history of lies and concealment efforts, but they still produced estimates far less accurate than those of UN inspection teams. These errors were compounded by efforts to spin intelligence indicators and analyses to support the private and public cases for war. The resulting focus on weapons of mass destruction and terrorism seems to have helped lead the United States to underestimate the importance of phase IV or stability operations.
- *Diplomatic estimates that exaggerated probable international support and the ability to win an allied and UN consensus.* The United States and Britain initially planned for far more support from their allies and the UN than they received. It was assumed that allies such as France and Germany could be persuaded to go along with the U.S. and British position, that UN inspectors would validate U.S. and British concerns regarding Iraqi concealment of weapons of mass destruction, and that they could win the support of the Security Council. In practice, none of these estimates proved to be correct, and the United States and Britain found themselves moving toward war in an unexpectedly adversarial diplomatic position.
- *Overreliance on exile groups with limited credibility and influence in Iraq*. U.S. and British plans to preserve cadres of friendly Ba'ath officials and Iraqi forces proved to be illusory. The exile groups the United States dealt with grossly exaggerated their influence and understanding of Iraq, while the exile groups that did have significant influence were largely Shi'ite religious groups with ties to Iran and independent militias. The result was both strong pressures to push secular officials and military out of the political system even if they had no serious ties to Saddam Hussein and to help polarize Iraq's sectarian and ethnic divisions.
- *Broader failures in intelligence and analysis of the internal political and economic structure of Iraq*. Failures that a leading intelligence expert involved in planning operations in Iraq said were the result of "quiescent US military and Intelligence community leaders who observed the distortion/cherry picking of data that lead to erroneous conclusions and poor planning," but failed to press their case or force the issue.
- *Inability to accurately assess the nature of Iraqi nationalism, the true level of internal differences, and the scale of Iraq's problems*. This failure in strategic assessment included the failure to see the scale of Iraq's ethnic and sectarian differences, its economic weaknesses and problems, the difficulty of modernizing an infrastructure sized more to 16–17 million people rather than the current population of 27–28 million, unrealistic estimates of "oil wealth," the probable hardcore support for the former regime in Sunni areas, secular versus theocratic tensions, the impact of tribalism, the impact of demographics in a society so young and with so many employment problems, and a host of other real-world problems that became U.S. and Coalition problems the moment Coalition forces crossed the border.
- *Overoptimistic plans for internal Iraqi political and military support*. The United States expected more Iraqi military units to be passive or even welcome the Coalition, and at least one leading Iraqi official to openly turn against Saddam Hussein.
- *Failure to foresee sectarian and ethnic conflict.* Somewhat amazingly—given U.S. problems in Lebanon, Somalia, and the Balkans—the United States did not plan for

major tensions and divisions among Arabs, Kurds, and other minorities. It did not plan for the contingency of tension and fighting between religious Sunnis, religious Shi'ites, and more secular Iraqis. For all of its talk about Saddam's links to terrorism, it did not plan for attacks and infiltration by Islamist extremists into a post-Saddam Iraq.

- *Failure to anticipate the threat of insurgency and outside extremist infiltration, in spite of significant intelligence warning, and to deploy elements of U.S. forces capable of dealing with counterinsurgency, civil-military operations, and nation building as U.S. forces advanced and in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the regime*. Regional commands were created based on administrative convenience, rather than need, and most of the initial tasks of stability operations and nation building were left up to improvisation by individual local commanders who had minimal or no expert civilian support.
- *Rejection of the importance of stability operations and nation building before, during, and immediately after the war*. Policy makers and many military commanders sought a quick war without the complications and problems of a prolonged stability or phase IV effort, and without the commitment and expense of nation building. Many policy makers saw such efforts as both undesirable and unnecessary. U.S. commanders saw them as a "trap" forcing the long-term commitment of U.S. troops that should be avoided if possible.
- *Shortfalls in U.S. military strength and capability to provide the personnel and skills necessary to secure Iraqi rear areas and urban areas as the Coalition advances, and to prevent the massive looting of government offices and facilities, military bases, and arms depots during and after the fighting*. The inability to secure key centers of gravity and rear areas helped create a process of looting that effectively destroyed the existing structure of governance and security.
- *Planning for premature U.S. military withdrawals from Iraq before the situation was clear or secure,* with major reductions initially planned to begin some three months after the fall of Saddam's regime, rather than planning, training, and equipping for a sustained period of stability operations.
- *Inability to execute a key feature of the war plan by miscalculating Turkey's willingness to allow the deployment of U.S. forces and transit through Turkey.* A lean U.S. troop deployment in the original war plan could not be executed because Turkey did not allow the basing and transit of either U.S. ground troops or aircraft. A reinforced division had to be omitted from the war plan, and the United States lacked the kind of presence that might have occupied and stabilized northern Iraq and the Sunni triangle.
- *Failure to anticipate and prepare for Iraqi expectations after the collapse of Saddam's regime* and for the fact that many Iraqis would oppose the invasion and see any sustained U.S. and Coalition presence as a hostile occupation.
- *A failure to plan and execute effective and broadly based information operations before, during, and after the invasion to win the "hearts and minds of the Iraqis."* The United States did not persuade the Iraqis that the Coalition came as liberators that would leave rather than as occupiers who would stay and exploit Iraq and that the Coalition would provide aid and support to a truly independent government and state. A secondary failure was not anticipating and defusing the flood of conspiracy theories certain to follow Coalition military action.
- *Failure to react to the wartime collapse of Iraqi military, security, and police forces and focus immediately on creating effective Iraqi forces.* This is a failure that placed a major and

avoidable burden on the United States and other Coalition forces and compounded the Iraqi feeling that Iraq had been occupied by hostile forces.

- *Lack of effective planning for economic aid and reconstruction.* While some efforts were made to understand the scale of the economic problems that had developed in Iraq since the early years of the Iran-Iraq War, the United States initially operated on the assumption that Iraq was an oil-rich country that could quickly recover with a change in leadership. There was little understanding of just how far short every aspect of Iraq's infrastructure was compared to current needs and of the problems that would arise in trying to construct adequate facilities and services. The problems in Iraq's state industries received only limited attention, particularly the importance of its military industries. Weaknesses in its agricultural sector were also misunderstood. The United States did correctly understand many of the limits in its financial sector, but was unprepared to deal with virtually all of the realities of an economy that had effectively become a "command kleptocracy."
- *Initial lack of a major aid program for stability operations.* Before and during the war, the United States planned for two sets of economic problems, neither of which occurred. One was a major attempt to burn Iraq's oil fields, and the second was the risk of a major collapse in the oil for food program. There was no serious plan to provide Iraq with large-scale economic aid once Saddam Hussein was driven from power. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was forced to rush a proposal forward calling for more than $18 billion worth of aid, plus Iraqi oil for food money and international aid, with no real basis for planning.
- *Failure to give the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) a meaningful mandate for conflict termination, stability operations, and nation-building effort.* With the creation of a small cadre of civilians and military in the ORHA, many initially recruited for only three-month tours, the ORHA planned to operate in an Iraq where all ministries and functions of government remained intact. It was charged with a largely perfunctory nation-building task, given negligible human and financial resources, not allowed meaningful liaison with regional powers, and not integrated with the military command. Effective civil-military coordination never took place between ORHA and the U.S. command during or after the war, and its mission was given so little initial priority that it did not even come to Baghdad until April 21, 2003—12 days after U.S. forces—on the grounds that it did not have suitable security.

True foresight is always difficult, and "20-20 hindsight" is always easy. The fact remains, however, that many, if not most, of the factors that led to America's initial failures in Iraq were brought to the attention of the president, the National Security Council, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the intelligence community in the summer and fall of 2002. The interagency efforts to prepare for the war before the Department of Defense took over almost all responsibility for planning and executing the war were meager at best. No one accurately prophesied all of the future, but many inside and outside government warned what it might be.

The problem was not that the interagency system did not work in providing many of the key elements that could have led to an accurate assessment. The problem was the most senior political and military decision makers ignored what they felt was

negative advice. They did so out of a combination of sincere belief, ideological conviction, and political and bureaucratic convenience. However, the cost to the United States, its allies, and Iraq has been unacceptably high. Furthermore, these early mistakes laid the groundwork for many of the problems in creating effective Iraqi forces and an inclusive political structure that could unite the country.

The end result was that the United States made major strategic mistakes in planning and executing the first phase of the Iraq War that greatly exacerbated the impact of its previous failures in adopting a workable post-Cold War strategy, focusing on the right capabilities, shaping the right forces, and providing the right resources. It failed both in its overall grand strategy and in the strategy it selected in going to war.

Its first mistake was its basic rationale for going to war: a threat based on intelligence estimates of Iraqi efforts to create weapons of mass destruction that the United States later found did not exist. It seems doubtful that the intelligence community was asked to lie, but it was certainly pressured to provide intelligence to please. The policy community selected the information it wanted to coax and filtered out the information it did not.

At the grand strategic level, the U.S. failure to plan for meaningful stability operations and nation building was the mistake that ultimately did the most to help lead to the insurgency in Iraq, but it was only one mistake among many. All serve as a warning that no force can ultimately be more effective than the strategy and grand strategy behind it.

Failures After the Fall of Saddam Hussein

The U.S. failures in preparing for and executing the war to drive Saddam Hussein from power almost inevitably laid the groundwork for other, equally serious failures during the year that followed. The United States made many additional errors during the period it exercised *de facto* sovereignty over Iraq through the CPA that helped encourage both the insurgency and civil violence. Specifically, the United States made the following major mistakes from April 2003 to June 2004:

- *Replacing the ORHA after the fall of Saddam Hussein with the CPA and suddenly improvising a vast nation-building and stability effort, recruiting and funding such an operation with little time for planning*. The United States then attempted to carry out the resulting mission along heavily ideological lines that tried to impose American methods and values on Iraq.
- *Failure to create and provide the kind and number of civilian elements in the U.S government necessary for nation-building and stability operations*. The lack of core competence in the U.S. government meant the United States did not know how to directly plan and administer the aid once the administration and Congress approved it, so the United States had to turn to contractors who also had no practical experience working in Iraq or with a command economy. They, in turn, were forced to deal with local contractors, many of whom were corrupt or inept. These problems were particularly serious for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), but affected

other parts of the Department of State and other civilian agencies; much of the civilian capability the United States did have was not recruited or was not willing to take risks in the field.

- *Lack of understanding the level of sectarian and ethnic tension and the risk of civil conflict.* Experts disagreed over the level of sectarian and ethnic tension and violence that the fall of Saddam Hussein would unleash, and many Iraqis felt such problems were minimal. The fact was, however, that the differences among Arab Shi'ites, Arab Sunnis, Kurds, and other Iraqi minorities were severe. The Arab Shi'ites wanted control and revenge. The Arab Sunnis sought to preserve power and feared the dominance of a large Arab Shi'ite faction. The Kurds wanted autonomy or independence, and the smaller minorities wanted security and to survive. The United States did not see the ethnic and sectarian fault lines that could divide the country that insurgents could exploit and that could lead to civil war.
- *Lack of early reaction to the wartime collapse of Iraqi military, security, and police forces and a failure to focus immediately on creating effective Iraqi forces*. This failure placed a major and avoidable burden on U.S. and other Coalition forces and compounded the Iraqi feeling that Iraq had been occupied by hostile forces. This failure was worsened by the failure to see the need to rush a working criminal justice system into place and to ensure that the central government established a presence and services at the local level.
- *Formal dissolution of the Iraqi military without making an adequate effort to replace it.* It was not until May 2003, roughly two months after the fall of Baghdad, that a 4,000-man U.S. military police effort was authorized for deployment to Baghdad, and it then took time to arrive. No serious effort to rebuild Iraqi police forces took place until June 2004, in spite of mass desertions right after the fighting and the turmoil caused by disbanding the Ba'ath Party and military and security forces.[6]
- *Inability to see that excessive de-Ba'athification could deprive the country of its secular core.* The United States saw Iraqi exiles—many who had strong sectarian and ethnic ties—as the force for change and the Iraqis who stayed in Iraq and supported the Ba'ath to survive as potential threats. The bulk of Iraq's secular leaders and professionals, however, had at least some ties to the Ba'ath and many had senior positions. So many of these Iraqis were disqualified from office, government, and the military that Iraq lost much of its secular leadership core, and many Sunnis were needlessly alienated. At the same time, Shi'ites with strong ties to Iran, who were sectarian and sometimes Islamist and with links to various militias, were elevated to power.
- *Fundamental misunderstanding of the Islamist extremist threat.* At one level, the United States simply could not understand how deeply religious many Iraqis were and that Islam was their primary value system, not democracy, human rights, or Western secular values. At a more serious level, the United States was engaging in a war on terrorism without understanding it had opened up a major new window of vulnerability for neo-Salafi Islamist extremists to exploit and that they could take control of most of the insurgency by exploiting the isolation of Arab Sunnis and push the country to the edge of civil war by attacking sensitive Shi'ite and Kurdish targets. It focused on the Ba'ath, not on the entire mix of threats.
- *Failure to plan and execute efforts to maintain the process of governance at the local, provincial, and central levels; to anticipate the risk that the structure of government would collapse and the risk of looting; and to create a plan for restructuring the military, police,*

and security forces. All of these needed to be proclaimed and publicized before, during, and immediately after the initial invasion to win the support of Iraqi officials and officers who were not linked to active support of Saddam Hussein and past abuses, and to preserve the core of governance that could lead to the rapid creation of both a legitimate government and security.

- *Failure to honestly assess the nature and size of the Iraqi insurgency as it grew and became steadily more dangerous*. While the United States, the CPA, and the U.S. command in Iraq did gradually recognize that a military threat was developing, it was initially seen as a small group of Ba'athist former regime loyalists or "bitter enders." It was not until late 2003 that the United States began to realize just how serious the insurgency really was and react to it. It was not until winter that a major planning effort was made to determine how the United States should seek to rebuild Iraqi military, security, and police forces capable of dealing with the rising threat; it was not until late in 2004 that a critical mass of funds, advisors, equipment, and facilities were really in place.
- *Many elements of the various militias were left intact, and Iraq was left as an armed society.* The CPA did make plans to disband the militias but never gave the effort serious high-level support, and these plans were largely aborted when the CPA was dissolved in June 2004.
- *Inability to assess and react to the overall scale of Iraq's economic problems*. The United States proved unwilling or unable to see just how serious the impact of the command kleptocracy the Ba'ath had established was, and the impact of war, favoritism, corruption, and sanctions over a 30-year period. It grossly underestimated the level of effort needed to reconstruct and modernize the Iraq economy, the shortcomings and the vulnerability of the oil sector, problems in infrastructure and services, problems in the state-dominated industrial sector, and problems in the agriculture sector. The United States at best saw the "tip of the iceberg" and was unprepared for the level of economic problems, unemployment, waste and corruption, and overall economic vulnerability that followed.
- *Allowing, if not encouraging, the CPA to adopt a "revolutionary" approach to transforming Iraq's economy and society.* It initially planned for a situation where the U.S.–led Coalition could improve its own values and judgments about the Iraqi people, politics, economy, and social structure for a period of some three years rather than to expedite the transfer of sovereignty back to Iraq as quickly as possible. The record is mixed, but the CPA seems to have decided to expedite the transfer of sovereignty in October 2003 only after the insurgency had already become serious, and its choice of June 2004 for doing so was largely arbitrary.
- *When a decision was taken to create a major aid program, the overall plan for reconstruction and aid was rushed into place and never was validated with proper plans and surveys, a proper staff, or adequate accountability procedures and measures of effectiveness.* By late 2003, the pressure to find funds for short-term projects designed to bring (or buy) local security had already become acute. Over time, more and more aid money had to be reprogrammed to meet such short-term needs. This often did more to give Iraqis funds and security than the longer-term aid programs, but it further disrupted an already poorly planned and executed formal aid plan.
- *Placing the CPA and the U.S. commands in separate areas, creating large, secure zones that isolated the U.S. effort from Iraqis, and carrying out only limited coordination with other*

Coalition allies. The United States did not develop a fully coordinated civil-military effort and initially let a system develop with major differences by region and command.

- *Inability to deploy the necessary core competency for stability operations and nation building within the U.S. military and government*. This failure was compounded by a lack of language and area skills and training on the part of most U.S. military forces; intelligence capabilities designed to provide the human intelligence (HUMINT), technical collection, analytic capabilities, and "fusion" centers necessary for stability, counterterrorist, and counterinsurgency operations were also lacking.
- *Staffing the CPA largely with people recruited for short tours who were often chosen on the basis of political and ideological vetting rather than on experience and competence*. Civilians were often chosen more on the basis of political vetting than experience and competence. Many were on three- to six-month tours, and permissive rotation policies allowed most who wanted to take an early departure to do so. Most military personnel were deployed on short rotations. There was little effort to establish a stable cadre of experienced personnel who remained in their positions and developed stable relations with the Iraqis.

WMD Failure

Another failure that had a major impact on Iraqi and global perceptions of the popular legitimacy of the war, and the popular legitimacy of the Coalition's occupation, was the failure to find the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that the United States and Britain had used as the rationale for the war. It is impossible to know how much this contributed to the insurgency and civil conflicts that followed, but early polls showed that two-thirds of Arab Sunnis and more than one-third of Arab Shi'ites felt that the Coalition invasion was not justified in the spring of 2003.

The Iraq War provided important lessons about the need for accurate and objective intelligence. The aftermath of the war provided equally important politico-military and practical lessons about the need to search for possible weapons of mass destruction and sensitive facilities during a war, and the need to secure such facilities as soon as possible. The United States did carry out an initial effort to find and secure Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and related facilities as it advanced, but this effort had limited manning, uncertain intelligence support, and could provide only limited coverage. The United States lacked an effective plan and coordinated effort to secure Iraqi WMD and missile facilities as U.S. forces advanced, and some—including nuclear facilities—were looted as a result.

The United States made little preparation for a timely disarmament and inspection effort with a credible audit trail. It relied on U.S. teams operating without international support and observers. It did not aggressively seek to include the UN. The inclusion of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would certainly have created political problems, but the United States does not seem to have been sensitive to the need to create teams that would have a high degree of international credibility.

The United States was so convinced that it would find large stocks of Iraqi weapons and/or major ongoing proliferation efforts that it failed to formulate a clear strategy for dealing with the almost inevitable charges that it had concealed the facts and challenges in the UN over the lifting of sanctions. The mix of biologists, chemists, nuclear experts, arms control experts, computer and document experts, and Special Forces troops was tailored around the case that Saddam had deployed weapons and given release authority to his commanders to use them under certain circumstances. It did not have the scale, expertise, and language skills to deal with other types of Iraqi proliferation activity—such as covert research and development efforts, tracking down complex patterns of illegal imports, locating and interviewing scientists, searching out concealed and dispersed facilities, and analyzing possible destruction sites.

The Initial Search Effort

During the invasion, the U.S. military tasked various elements of Special Forces and other units to search for weapons of mass destruction. The overall level of equipment and training was limited, however, and many units overreacted to suspected sites and failed to properly characterize the weapons, equipment, facilities, and substances they found.

Task Force 20, the U.S. Army Special Forces team that had a key mission in this search, was deployed in March 2003 and evidently before the actual fighting began. However, Task Force 20 was relatively small and also had the broader mission of looking for key figures in the Iraqi leadership. Similar problems in resources and mission focus affected many of the other special purpose teams involved.[7]

The main initial U.S. effort was conducted by a 600-person group called the 75th Exploitation Task Force, which was supported by the 513th Military Intelligence Brigade and a smaller effort sent in by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. These specialists moved slowly and spent most of their initial efforts going through known facilities slowly and by the numbers. They focused on the facilities most likely to have been vacated months earlier because they were known to be targets both for UNMOVIC and U.S. military action, but failed to ensure that the United States secured key declared facilities like the nuclear facilities subject to IAEA inspection.[8]

There were conflicting reports about the pace of the initial search effort. One U.S. government source reported on background that as of early May 2003, the United States "had secured only 44 of the 85 top potential weapons sites in the Baghdad area and 153 of the 372 considered most important to rebuilding Iraq's government and economy." Others state that the U.S. inspections teams had visited 19 top weapons sites, with two left for investigation, and that they had surveyed another 45 out of 68 top "non-WMD sites," without known links to weapons of mass destruction, but suspect as potential sites.[9]

In still another report, the 75th Exploitation Task Force was reported to have visited some 300 facilities by the end of May 2003.[10] The true scale of the targeting and search problem may best be indicated by the fact that Stephen A. Cambone, the

Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, announced on May 30 that only 70 of roughly 600 potential weapons facilities had been examined out of an "integrated master site list" prepared by U.S. intelligence agencies before the Iraq War.[11]

Expanding the Effort and Creating the Iraq Survey Group

This failure to find the stated reason for the war inevitably fed opposition to the Coalition occupation as well as broader opposition to the war. The United States was slow to see the impact this failure had on the insurgency and active opposition in Iraq. As time went on, however, the growing political and military problems created by the lack of an effective wartime and early postwar search effort forced the United States to greatly expand its search team and give it far more capability. The legitimacy of the war became a growing issue inside and outside Iraq. In late May, the United States announced it would supplement the 75th Exploitation Task Force with a much larger Iraq Survey Group (ISG), which included elements from the U.S., British, and Australian intelligence communities. The search effort was expanded to the point where the ISG was manned by between 1,300 and 1,400 people from the United States government and from the United Kingdom and Australia.

The way the United States initially approached the postwar effort to survey Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and the reasons for creating the ISG, were described as follows in a Department of Defense briefing on May 7, 2003:

> The command, USCENTCOM, has a command inside of Iraq known as the Coalition Land Component Commander—Coalition Forces Land Component Commander or CFLCC. . .And each day, within that organization in what they have as their operation center, which is known as the C3, they sit down and work through their priorities. That priority list itself has been pulled together as a consequence of information that we had going into the conflict of sites that we thought important. As you know, there are some thousand sites that we identified; those sites included not just weapons of mass destruction sites, but also prisoner of war—prisoner camps—prisons, rather, prisoner of war locations, terrorist camps and facilities, as well as regime and leadership targets. So there are some thousand of them, roughly, of which about half are related to weapons of mass destruction.
>
> . . .As it stands now, we have been to about 70 sites that we were looking to cover. Now, what's interesting about that is that those are the 70 sites that were on the list when we started. Since then, we have been to about another 40 which have come to light as a consequence of this process that I have been describing to you here. And the way this works is with respect to a WMD site in particular, once it's been identified, there is a survey team, which may have been there already, having come up with the troops as they came through the countryside, or sent out in advance. And they will go to the site, they will do a survey and determine whether or not it's important for more advanced units to come in and take a look at what's there. So, it's a site survey team. And so their job is done.
>
> Next would come in a mobile exploitation team, an MET, as they're being called, which would do a much more thorough assessment of the site and also inspect any additional sites that USCENTCOM might have recommended.

And then, to the extent you need disablement of a facility or a capability in the site, there are disablement teams that are sent out to disarm, or render safe or destroy those—any delivery systems, weapons, agents or facilities that might be found. Now, the organization that currently is assigned this mission is . . . known as the 75th Group. It is assigned this discovery and exploitation mission. It, in turn, is supported by a military intelligence brigade, the 513th. These units have been, by the by, in theater for a very long period of time.

The expertise within the 75th Group extends across some 600 people, and they are distributed across interrogators, interviewers, people who do the document exploitations, the material exploitation and the analysts; that is, the people who each day sort of come together, take the information that's come on board and try then to make recommendations about what might be done next. The expertise within the group is made up of people from the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, from the individual services, from DTRA, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, the FBI, and then there are coalition partners who, themselves, are part of this ongoing effort.

That group, the 75th, will soon, toward the end of this month, begin to have an augmentation take place, and that will be done under the auspices of what we're calling the Iraq Survey Group. That group will be headed by a two-star general, a major general, Keith Dayton, who, as it turns out, is a member of Admiral Jacoby's staff. He will take the lead for the discovery and the exploitation that we have been talking about. And in particular, its mission is to discover, take custody of, exploit and disseminate information on individuals, records, materials, facilities, networks and operations as appropriate relative to individuals associated with the regime, weapons of mass destruction, terrorists and terrorist ties and their organizations, information having to do with the Iraqi Intelligence, Security and Overseas Services, and those accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and POWs.

So it's a very large undertaking of which the weapons of mass destruction effort is a part in an important part of that effort, but only a part. The organization will pretty much double or triple in size. There'll be some 1,300 experts who will be associated with this organization, plus another support element of maybe another 800. So you're talking about 2,000 people, more or less, who will begin arriving with the lead elements of the command starting toward the end of this month and the expertise, again, from the organizations I described a moment ago and will include, as well, people from Treasury, some of whom are already in theater, by the way, as well as U.S. citizens who had been in the past . . .

UNSCOM inspectors, some other contractors, and again, our coalition partners. Now, that effort is going to be supported by a fusion cell that is being constructed here in Washington, again under the executive agency of the Defense Intelligence Agency. It is made up of experts from around the United States government. And they receive information from the 75th Group now, and they will receive it from the ISG as it stands up. And their job is going to be to do that kind of in-depth analysis that's necessary in order to make this a successful effort over time.

. . . When one comes across a site where we think that we need to be taking samples, for example, there are roughly four sets of samples taken, one for processing in-theater, two are sent here to the United States, and another one is sent to a non-U.S. laboratory for independent analysis and the verification of the results of those tests. And there is a

> very strict chain of custody process that is put in place to assure that those samples are not tampered with either in the theater, in transit, when they're in the laboratories, or when the results come back to us here. That's all supplemented, then, as I said a moment ago, by interviewing the personnel who we think are involved. I made mention to you of the subordinate scientists as well as the lead scientists are being interviewed. The regime figures are interviewed. We go through the documents and so forth. And then, if we find we've got to dispose of materials, we do so in a way that is safe for all concerned.[12]

The ISG's main center of activity remained in Iraq, with a headquarters in Baghdad, but it had additional facilities in Qatar. Its collection operation included a joint interrogation debriefing center, a joint materiel exploitation center, chemical and biological intelligence support teams, and an ISG operation center. Its main analytic effort was collocated with the CENTCOM forward headquarters in Qatar, along with its combined media processing center. The ISG had liaison elements with Combined Joint Task Force 7 in Kuwait, with other U.S. government agencies inside Iraq, and with an intelligence fusion center in Washington, D.C.[13]

The end result of this increased effort, however, was the discredit of the primary rationale that both the United States and the United Kingdom had used in going to war. The civilian head of the ISG, David Kay—who had been the chief UN nuclear weapons inspector in Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War—was convinced that Iraq had WMD stockpiles. When he went to Iraq for the UN in the 1990s, he uncovered a nuclear program code-named "PC3" that tested ingredients to build a nuclear bomb. The inspectors also uncovered VX nerve gas, anthrax, and botulinum toxin.[14]

Conversion to a Forensic Search Effort

When Kay took over the task of finding Iraq's WMD in June 2003, the effort became less search and destroy and more forensic investigation. Kay knew that it was nearly impossible to search all 946 suspected WMD locations and that the 75th had inspected only a fraction by that point. Instead he advocated going after the Iraqi scientists and documents that would explain where the real sites were located.[15]

When Kay began going through the intelligence from the previous decade, however, he found very little new information about WMD. He also found that most of the prewar intelligence on biological weapons labs came from a German intelligence source code-named "Curveball." Nonetheless, Kay believed that Iraq did have WMD.[16]

Under Kay, the ISG stopped searching the suspected sites and began interviewing Iraqis and shifting through thousands of pages of documents. As the investigation proceeded, however, Kay's group soon found that Iraqi WMD capacity was virtually negligible and almost all reports that Iraq had maintained or revived its nuclear and missile program were wrong. Further, there was virtually no evidence that there had been stockpiles of chemical or biological weapons.[17]

By the fall of 2003 Kay faced pressure to use the ISG for purposes other than searching for WMD, and in December it was clear that the ISG team would take

over other intelligence missions. Kay stepped down from his position and testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services on January 28, 2004. He said, "We were almost all wrong, and I certainly include myself." He concluded that Saddam Hussein had clearly wanted to appear as if he had WMD, but did not actually possess the capability.[18]

There is no way to know just how important the failure to validate the key reasons for the invasion affected Iraqi behavior and the violence that followed. It is clear that many Iraqis did welcome the invasion and the fall of Saddam Hussein and still did in 2007, in spite of all the problems and violence that followed.

The fact remains, however, that the United States and the United Kingdom were forced to gradually restate their rationale for the war and focus on a dubious link to the "war on terrorism" and a more credible need to liberate Iraq from tyranny. This, however, presented the problem that the Coalition had to make unconvincing efforts to reinvent the legitimacy of going to war long after the war was over while it made it all too clear it was manifestly unprepared to provide the security, stability, and nation-building efforts necessary to make a real liberation effective.

Failures from June 2004 to the "Battle of Baghdad"

The United States and its allies did slowly improve their stability and nation-building efforts in Iraq after the transfer of power back from the Coalition to the interim Iraqi government in June 2004. At the same time, they continued to make a series of serious mistakes in virtually every aspect of Coalition operations:

- *The Coalition and the CPA did not react quickly or effectively to the fact that they had deprived Iraq of much of its secular leadership when it removed most Ba'athist officials from office.* The end result was to restructure the nature of political power in Iraq along secular and ethnic lines—divided among an emerging Shi'ite majority, with strong religious ties and links to Iran, separatist Kurdish elements, and Sunnis who now were being pushed toward taking religious rather than secular nationalist positions. While some "national" political leaders did emerge, the end result was to attempt democracy in a nation with few experienced political leaders, emerging political parties divided largely on sectarian and ethnic lines, and no underpinning experience in enforcing human rights and a rule of law. Elections and formal documents like constitutions were confused with a functioning political base that could make democracy work. One key impact was that such efforts helped push the Iraqis into polarizing and voting on sectarian and ethnic lines. When the first true national election took place on December 15, 2005, Iraqis voted in very large numbers, but they voted to divide, not to unite.
- *The political process the United States imposed was too demanding in terms of time and complexity.* The sudden end to the Coalition in June 2004 left a partial political vacuum. Then, a focus on elections and the constitution created a schedule where Iraqis had to vote for an interim government, then for a constitution, and hold another election for a permanent government in a little over a year during 2005. Iraqis were then left with the need to form a new government, create new methods of governance,

resolve over 50 issues in the constitution within a nominal period of four months after a government was in place, campaign for 60 days for a new constitutional referendum, and then implement whatever new political system emerged during the course of 2006. This process inevitably further polarized Iraqi politics along sectarian and ethnic lines.

- *The United States emphasized elections and politics over effective governance at every level from the national to the local.* It did not provide strong advisory teams for key ministries, including the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior. It had very small and weakly organized interagency teams at the governorate or provincial level, with tenuous coordination and often with only a token civil presence in the field. It did not organize and man provincial reconstruction teams for Iraq's 18 governorates until 2006, and none were in place as of April 2006—more than three years after the war. Little effort was made to deal with local government, leaving the government of key cities up to the political leadership that could take control and which had the militia or police forces to enforce it. This created major problems in Baghdad and helped allow Shi'ite Islamist extremists to take *de facto* control of Basra.
- *The United States and its allies became involved in serious military operations and urban warfare against Sunni insurgents in western Iraq, but still continued to underestimate the seriousness of the emerging Sunni insurgency and the extent that it might push Iraq toward division and civil war.* They continued to treat the insurgents as a relatively small group of activists with a limited base. At the same time, the United States was slow to see how serious the rise of neo-Salafi extremist groups was and that their strategy included a deliberate effort to divide Iraq and provoke a civil war, rather than simply attack Coalition and allied forces. As a result, it underestimated the seriousness of the Shi'ite reaction and the creation of Shi'ite militia forces and covert forces designed to attack Sunni targets.
- *U.S. military operations often occurred at a level that focused on short-term tactical success—sometimes seriously damaging urban areas in the process—but which did not bring lasting security or stability.* It took considerable time for the United States to understand that either U.S. or Iraqi forces had to occupy the areas where the insurgents were defeated and provide aid and security after military action was critical. It took equally long to realize that stability operations required immediate and effective aid, police activity, and an Iraqi government presence.
- *The United States came to recognize that the creation of effective Iraqi forces was critical to creating a secure and stable Iraq by mid-2004, but was slow to staff such an effort, provide the funds required, and see the scale of effort required.* It was not until late 2004 that it began to provide the resources needed to train the regular military forces, and not until 2005 that resources created effective training facilities. It then took time to recognize that new Iraqi units would need embedded training teams and partner units to become effective. As late as the end of 2005, it still provided only limited equipment to the Iraqi regular forces. It still did not have credible plans for making them fully independent of a need for support from U.S. air, artillery, and armor in early 2007 and was slow to see the need to give them independent command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence/battle management and information seeking and retrieval capabilities and a proper mix of sustainment and combat and service support units.

- *The United States was slow to see that the emergence of civil violence, and sectarian and ethnic conflict, was becoming at least as serious a threat as the Sunni insurgency.* Sectarian and ethnic violence had been an issue from the start, but it grew steadily more serious during 2004 as the Sunni insurgents shifted the focus of their attacks from Coalition targets to include Shi'ite, Kurdish, and progovernment Sunnis. This provoked a Shi'ite and Kurdish response in terms of ethnic cleansing, killings and kidnappings, death squads, and other forces of divisive civil violence. Shi'ite militias and local Sunni security forces became a major new source of violence, compounded by escalating violent crime.
- *By the spring of 2003, the tensions between sects and ethnic groups had already begun to produce a process of ethnic separation and ethnic cleansing that became truly serious in 2004 and 2005, and the United States was slow to respond to these until late 2006 to early 2007.* In mixed cities, the separation was often by neighborhood, with minorities being forced to relocate to areas where they were in the majority. In cities like Kirkuk and Basra, the lines were far clearer. In Kirkuk, the Kurds pushed for ethnic separation. In Basra, Shi'ite puritans attempted to push out other sects and Shi'ites who would not practice their beliefs. The United States had no clear policy or instruments for dealing with these problems.
- *The United States did not pay proper attention to the emergence of the Ministry of Interior, and some of its key special security units, as Shi'ite rather than as national forces.* The end result was a series of prison abuses, the division of part of Iraq's forces along sectarian lines, and the involvement of at least some Ministry of Interior forces in "death squads" attacking Sunni targets and increasing the risk of civil war. It was not until October 2005 that the United States resolved jurisdictional squabbles between the Department of State and the Department of Defense over who should control the advisory effort for the Ministry of Interior and its forces. It thus failed to take effective action to deal with the ministries, the national police, and the regular police during the so-called "year of the police" in 2006.
- *These problems were compounded by the relatively low priority that continued to be given to the development of effective police forces, courts, and a government presence tied to the national government.* The police the Coalition trained and equipped were sometimes corrupt and lacking in leadership and often were too poorly equipped and deployed to operate in areas where insurgents, militias, or hostile political groups were present. A functioning court system was often lacking, and the central government often did little more than make token appearances and give promises it did not keep. While the insurgency was contained to the point where some 85 percent of attacks occurred in only four provinces (albeit with 42 percent of the population), violence was endemic in many other areas. Crime was a major factor, and so was the threat to minorities in areas dominated by a given ethnic group. While insurgent violence was a key factor in Baghdad and Mosul, few areas were really secure, and in many Shi'ite areas ordinary Shi'ites faced pressure or threats from Shi'ite militias or extremists.
- *The Department of State and other civil branches of the U.S. government continued to have serious problems in recruiting and retaining suitable personnel.* Many career Foreign Service officers would not volunteer, so inexperienced contract personnel had to be deployed. While some professionals did serve at considerable personal sacrifice, the

U.S. government could not find enough qualified civilians willing to go into the field and partner with U.S. military forces. This put additional strains on the U.S. military, which simply did not have the necessary cadres of civil-military experts, military police, area experts and linguists, etc. Moreover, the combination of security and recruiting problems tended to keep personnel in the Green Zone around the U.S. Embassy, overmanning that area and further undermanning operations in the field.

- *USAID, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the contracting officers in the Department of Defense lacked the experience and the expertise to plan and manage aid on anything like the scale required.* They also lacked basic competence in managing and planning such an effort. Vast waste and corruption continued throughout the aid effort, most of which was spent outside Iraq. Spending was used as a measure of effectiveness, not the impact on the Iraqi economy or meeting Iraqi needs. Many long-term projects did not meet a valid requirement or were executed in ways where it was impossible to sustain them and/or provide security. Serious problems occurred because the United States imposed its own methods and standards on an aging, war-worn infrastructure that Iraqis could maintain but not effectively integrate with U.S. equipment and standards.
- *Interagency rivalry and recruiting problems prevented the timely staffing and deployment of provincial reconstruction teams.* The Department of State and the Department of Defense could not agree on some aspects of how to staff and organize the Provincial Reconstruction Teams until April 2006. Major recruiting problems meant that the pool of civilians recruited for the teams often lacked real professional experience, and many teams remained below staffing limits.
- *The U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction (SIGIR) found massive accounting abuses and fraud in the most expensive aid effort since the Marshall Plan.* The Congressional Research Service estimated the total cost of U.S. aid allocations (all grant assistance) for Iraq appropriated from 2003 to 2006 totaled $28.9 billion. It estimated that $17.6 billion (62 percent) went for economic and political reconstruction assistance, while $10.9 billion (38 percent) was used to aid Iraqi security.[19] A higher proportion of Iraqi aid was spent on economic reconstruction of critical infrastructure than in the case of Germany and Japan. Total U.S. assistance to Iraq through March 2006 was already equivalent to the total assistance provided to Germany—and almost double that provided to Japan—from 1946–1952. The United States provided Germany with a total of $29.3 billion in assistance in constant 2005 dollars from 1946–1952 with 60 percent in economic grants, nearly 30 percent in economic loans, and the remainder in military aid. Total U.S. assistance to Japan for 1946–1952 was roughly $15.2 billion in 2005 dollars, of which 77 percent was in grants and 23 percent was in loans.
- *The aid process made some progress, but was seriously crippled by the fact that the U.S. military did not provide security for most projects, and contract security personnel were extremely expensive and often would operate only in limited areas.* Some 25 percent or more of aid spending went to security, and aid projects tended to be concentrated in safe areas. Efforts to push the security problem down onto contractors compounded the problem. The work of the SIGIR led the Bush administration to admit that much of this effort failed.[20] Iraq and the United States were unable to account for aid spending in detail or to measure the effectiveness of aid projects with any accuracy. Far too often,

progress was measured in terms of the money spent, projects started, buildings completed, or gross measures of capability like the size of generating plants or volume of water purification.

The ability to bring projects to a successful, self-sustaining conclusion could be sampled only selectively, and largely in secure areas. In case after case, projects failed to result in the proper distribution of services, meet evolving demand for power or water, and turn new buildings into functioning schools or clinics. In many cases, projects had to be downsized or relocated to deal with security problems. Buildings were not properly completed, equipped, or staffed.

Even worse, the United States never showed it could deal with Iraq's worsening insurgency and civil conflicts by frankly addressing the risks and problems involved. Rather than honestly admitting and assessing the political, military, economic, and aid problems that it had done so much to create, the U.S. government systematically exaggerated what were sometimes very real successes, downplayed risks and problems, and provided public and media reporting that "spun" the facts to the point where such reporting lost credibility with Iraqis and the U.S. public. The United States seemed unable to develop an effective approach to public diplomacy in Iran and the region and slowly lost credibility in the United States and the rest of the world.

These problems were compounded by the misuse of public opinion polls to try to find propaganda arguments rather than honestly understand the perceptions and needs of the Iraqi people. From the summer of 2003 on, polls of Iraqis provided serious warnings about anger against the Coalition and distrust of its motives and actions, willingness to support attacks on Coalition forces, divisions within Iraq, and the perceived failure of U.S. efforts to support reconstruction. U.S. officials largely ignored the negative results and cherry-picked any favorable results for propaganda and political purposes.

As a result, the United States and its allies made a mix of mistakes before, during, and after the war that helped to make an insurgency effective and that laid the ground for much broader patterns of civil violence. By the time the United States and the Coalition accepted the true scale of the problems they faced and had done much to create, they had lost nearly three critical years, and critical efforts—like the development of an effective Iraqi police effort that was still badly underresourced. It was far harder to help Iraqis even create a government, much less make it operate effectively. The bulk of aid funds had been obligated with few lasting real-world achievements. The steadily higher levels of civil conflict threatened progress in developing the regular military, and progress in reforming the Ministry of Interior, security forces, and the police. America had made a long series of strategic, tactical, and operational mistakes since the initial war-planning phase in 2002, and the United States, its allies, and the Iraqis were paying the price.

2

Defining the Players

Many different groups or "players" emerged after the fall of Saddam Hussein that shaped the insurgency and Iraq's diverse civil conflicts. Some were an almost inevitable reaction to the Coalition invasion and the fall of Saddam Hussein. The first to emerge were the Sunni "nationalist" insurgents and Sunni Islamist extremists. These two groups formed the brunt of the Sunni insurgency that developed after the U.S.–led invasion. The nationalist insurgents, often referred to as "former regime elements," strove to restore the Ba'athist government, or at least return to power in some way. There was evidence of some planning by these elements before the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. They clearly focused on the U.S. and Coalition presence and generally did not seek sectarian targets.

The second group of Sunni insurgents emerged as both a product of Coalition failures and broader tensions in the region. These were Islamist extremists that included both foreign cadres and Iraqis. The leadership of these neo-Salafi extremists was foreign in 2003 and 2004, but came to take on a much more Iraqi character as time progressed. Unlike the nationalists, the neo-Salafi elements of the insurgency saw Iraq as part of a much broader war of Sunni Puritanism. These insurgents readily attacked U.S. and Coalition forces, Iraqi forces, and Iraqi civilians of all sects and ethnicities. These neo-Salafi insurgents—led by al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia—came to dominate the insurgency by mid-2004, and their sectarian attacks against Shi'ites, Kurds, and more secular Sunnis from 2003 onward helped push the country into civil conflict.

The next group of players was the Shi'ite militias, which were both a product of Iraq's long-standing sectarian tensions and the Coalition's initial failures to even try to create an effective postwar security structure. Some of these militias were a product of the Iran-Iraq War and existed before the U.S. invasion and the Sunni insurgency, but came to take on a much more violent role in the civil conflict as time progressed. Others were created after the invasion. The two largest Shi'ite militias were the Badr

Organization and the Mahdi Army, both of which were tied to political movements that came to dominate Shi'ite politics.

The Badr Organization, the military wing of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, had been suppressed and exiled in Iran during Saddam Hussein's regime, while the Mahdi Army generally arose in the year following the U.S. invasion. The Badr Organization was formed, for the most part, to protect the Shi'ite political and religious establishment and did not actively fight the Coalition presence. The Badr Organization, however, was not loyal to a national Iraq and was involved in sectarian fighting.

The Mahdi Army was formed as a militia by a young, extremist Shi'ite cleric who strongly opposed the Coalition "occupation." The Mahdi miltia collaborated with some Sunni insurgent elements in attacks against Coalition troops in 2003 and 2004, but in the growing civil war came to take on a Shi'ite extremist role.

The final major group of principal players in Iraq's insurgency and civil conflicts was the Kurdish militias in northern Iraq. After the U.S.–led invasion, rivaling Kurdish leaders combined their militias into the collective "Peshmerga." The Peshmerga cooperated with the Coalition and many elements were incorporated in the Iraqi security forces, but their loyalty was to the northern Kurdish region that had enjoyed the status of an autonomous zone throughout the 1990s.

Collectively, these players came to shape the Iraqi insurgency and civil conflict. The problems that the United States and the Coalition faced continually changed as some groups faded and others strengthened, but the core of all these elements challenged U.S. and Coalition forces throughout the conflict. At various times these forces collaborated to attack the Coalition, but for the most part they became increasingly factionalized and sectarian.

SUNNI ISLAMIST EXTREMISTS AND NEO-SALAFI VERSUS "NATIONALIST" INSURGENTS

Experts differ on how the various Sunni insurgent groups have competed or coordinated over time; and as to their goals, leadership, strength, structure, and goals. It is clear, however, that the most effective and dominant groups have all been Sunni Islamist extremist groups since mid-2004.

Sunni-dominated Ba'ath loyalists, or former regime loyalists, did play a dominant role in the insurgency during 2003 and possibly into early 2004. The killing and capture of most of the surviving Ba'ath leadership, including Saddam and his sons, however, quickly weakened a power structure that had limited Sunni popular support. It created a power vacuum within the Sunni community that combined with the impact of de-Ba'athification to devolve power back to tribes, regional and community leaders, and increasingly to religious factions as it became apparent that the Coalition was effectively empowering Arab Shi'ites at the expense of Arab Sunnis.

Former regime loyalists continued to play a role in Iraq, operating largely out of Syria. This included financing, arming, and supporting local Sunni movements, former Ba'ath elements, and some Sunni Islamist elements. These elements in the

insurgency did not, however, have the ability to dominate Sunni insurgent activity once their leaders were gone, or win broad popular support.

The nationalist insurgents were largely eliminated as a major threat to stability by mid-2004, by which point neo-Salafi extremists had come to dominate the insurgency. Through 2003 and 2004, however, the nationalist and neo-Salafi insurgents worked together at some level, and they had a common set of targets. At the same time, a number of intelligence, Coalition, and Iraqi government experts felt the insurgents did divide into two major groups:

- *The first were largely native Iraqi Sunni insurgents*. They still seemed to be primarily nationalist in character, some still with Ba'athist ties. They were not seeking regional or global jihad, but rather the ability to influence or control events in Iraq. In general, native Iraqi Sunni nationalists wanted to return to a government closer to the Ba'athist regime. They were religious, but a secular regime under Sunni control was acceptable. Their primary goal was to regain the power they once had or, at a minimum, obtain their "fair share" of power and not be subject to Shi'ite rule. Anger, revenge, economic need, opposition to the U.S. invasion and any government that grew out of it, or sheer lack of hope in the current system were all motives as well.
- *The second consisted of Sunni "neo-Salafi" insurgents*—particularly those led by harder-line neo-Salafi figures like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. These groups had different goals. They believed they were fighting a region-wide war in Iraq for a form of Sunni extremism that not only would eliminate any presence of Christians and Jews, but would also create a Sunni puritan state in which other sects of Islam would be forced to convert to their interpretation or be destroyed.

  Most of the nationalist groups avoided attacking other sects of Islam, at least publicly, and have made a growing effort to identify themselves as Iraqi rather than as groups dominated by foreign leaders' influence. Others, like al-Qa'ida, were more extreme. Those neo-Salafis had little of mainstream Islam's tolerance for "peoples of the book" and had no tolerance for other interpretations of Islam. Such insurgents were known in the Muslim world as *Takfiris*—a term that referred to groups that based their ideology on determining who was a believer in their view. They saw those who did not fit their definition of piety as apostates. To some, particularly al-Qa'ida in Iraq, all other Islamic sects like Shi'ites and even other Sunnis were effectively nonbelievers or *Kafirs.*

Such generalizations have severe limits and uncertainties. There was no way to know how many Iraqis supported the extremist and violent neo-Salafi and other Sunni elements of the insurgency any more than there were any precise counts of the foreign volunteers who supported them. It was unclear how many members of Sunni extremist groups actually supported the group's ideological goals rather than acting out of anger, misinformation, and/or a naïve search for martyrdom.

Sunni Puritanism does not, in itself, mean advocating violence against other Islamic sects or those outside Islam. Most Sunni puritans and religious leaders do not advocate violence in any form, especially against other Muslims. However, some Sunni puritan extremist movements do call Shi'ites and other sects heretics (*bid'a*),

attacker of God's unity (*tawhid*), or even advocates of polytheism (*shirk*). Some extremist puritan Salafi preachers call Shi'ites apostates and advocate shunning them, hating them, and scorning them as *rawafidh* (which means rejectionists, a reference to the Shi'ites' rejection of electing Abu Bakr as the first Caliph after the death of the Prophet over Ali, Islam's fourth Caliph and the Shi'ites first Imam).[1]

One key reality in Iraq is that small cadres of violent extremists can do so much to drive a nation toward civil war and intimidate or dominate large elements of the local population who oppose many, if not most, of their actions and ideals. Other Sunni Salafist and puritan groups and traditional Shi'ite groups coexist and work closely with other Shi'ite groups. Notable examples include Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Palestine. In addition, the Muslim Brotherhood cooperated with Iran after the Revolution in 1979, despite some of the country's actions against Iranian Sunnis.

Most of the less extreme and more nationalist Iraqi-dominated Sunni insurgent groups were not anti-Shi'ite on any ideological level, although they reacted to the growth of Shi'ite political power and the actions of Shi'ite militias as the nation moved toward civil conflict. Some even cooperated in operations with anti-Coalition Sh'ite groups early on in the occupation.

The fact that diverse Sunni Islamist groups came to dominate the insurgency relatively quickly deprived it of the kind of central leadership and command and control it might have had if the Ba'ath had been able to establish leadership over these movements.

U.S. experts talked of informal networks that, using tools like the Internet, coordinated operations and exchanged data on tactics, targets, and operations. There was evidence of such exchanges between cells in Iraq and outside groups, including those in Syria and Afghanistan. Insurgent groups also used the media to get near-real-time information on what other groups and cells were doing and to find out what tactics produced the maximum political and media impact.

Nevertheless, many of the Sunni insurgent groups or cells that did not have ties to extremist groups or former Ba'ath rulers could get money or some degree of leadership from the Ba'athist structures that emerged since the fall of Saddam Hussein. It is generally misleading to call them "former regime loyalists" or "former regime elements." They were rather Sunni nationalists involved in a struggle for current power. This allowed the insurgency to broaden its base and establish ties to Islamic groups as well. There was a broad consensus over which Islamist extremist groups were most important, but little consensus over their relative strength and power, and the nature of the smaller groups.

The Department of State Estimate

While the various Sunni Islamist extremist groups were in a constant state of flux, the unclassified assessments in the U.S. Department of State *Country Reports on Terrorism* provided the following description of the key Islamist groups in April 2005:

Iraq remains the central battleground in the global war on terrorism. Former regime elements as well as foreign fighters and Islamic extremists continued to conduct terrorist attacks against civilians and non-combatants. These elements also conducted numerous insurgent attacks against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, which often had devastating effects on Iraqi civilians and significantly damaged the country's economic infrastructure.

. . . Jordanian-born Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and his organization emerged in 2004 to play a leading role in terrorist activities in Iraq. In October, the US Government designated Zarqawi's group, Jama'at al Tawhid wa'al-Jihad, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). In December, the designation was amended to include the group's new name Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (or "The al-Qa'ida Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers") and other aliases following the "merger" between Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden's al-Qa'ida organization. Zarqawi announced the merger in October, and in December, bin Laden endorsed Zarqawi as his official emissary in Iraq. Zarqawi's group claimed credit for a number of attacks targeting Coalition and Iraqi forces, as well as civilians, including the October massacre of 49 unarmed, out-of-uniform Iraqi National Guard recruits. Attacks that killed civilians include the March 2004 bombing of the Mount Lebanon Hotel, killing seven and injuring over 30, and a December 24 suicide bombing using a fuel tanker that killed nine and wounded 19 in the al-Mansur district of Baghdad.

In February 2004, Zarqawi called for a "sectarian war" in Iraq. He and his organization sought to create a rift between Shi'a and Sunnis through several large terror attacks against Iraqi Shi'a. In March 2004, Zarqawi claimed credit for simultaneous bomb attacks in Baghdad and Karbala that killed over 180 pilgrims as they celebrated the Shi'a festival of Ashura. In December, Zarqawi also claimed credit for a suicide attack at the offices of Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of Iraq's largest Shi'a parties, which killed 15 and wounded over 50.

Zarqawi has denied responsibility for another significant attack that same month in Karbala and Najaf, two of Shi'a Islam's most holy cities, which killed Iraqi civilians and wounded more than 120. Terrorists operating in Iraq used kidnapping and targeted assassinations to intimidate Iraqis and third-country nationals working in Iraq as civilian contractors. Nearly 60 noncombatant Americans died in terrorist incidents in Iraq in 2004. Other American noncombatants were killed in attacks on Coalition military facilities or convoys. In June, Zarqawi claimed credit for the car bomb that killed the chairman of the Coalition-appointed Iraqi Governing Council. In April, an American civilian was kidnapped and later beheaded. One month later, a video of his beheading was posted on an al-Qa'ida-associated website. Analysts believe that Zarqawi himself killed the American as well as a Korean hostage, kidnapped in June. Zarqawi took direct credit for the September kidnapping and murder of two American civilians and later their British engineer co-worker, and the October murder of a Japanese citizen.

In August, the Kurdish terrorist group Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and killing of 12 Nepalese construction workers, followed by the murder of two Turkish citizens in September. Many other foreign civilians have been kidnapped. Some have been killed, others released, some remain in their kidnappers' hands, and the fate of others, such as the director of CARE, is unknown.

Other terrorist groups were active in Iraq. Ansar al-Sunna, believed to be an offshoot of the Ansar al-Islam group founded in Iraq in September 2001, first came to be known

in April 2003 after issuing a statement on the Internet. In February 2004, Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for bomb attacks on the offices of two Kurdish political parties in Irbil, which killed 109 Iraqi civilians. The Islamic Army in Iraq has also claimed responsibility for terrorist actions. Approximately 3,800 disarmed persons remained resident at the former Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MeK) military base at Camp Ashraf; the MeK is a designated US Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). More than 400 members renounced membership in the organization in 2004. Forty-one additional defectors elected to return to Iran, and another two hundred were awaiting ICRC assistance for voluntary repatriation to Iran at the end of the year. PKK/ KADEK/Kongra Gel, a designated foreign terrorist group, maintains an estimated 3,000 to 3,500 armed militants in northern Iraq, according to Turkish Government sources and NGOs. In the summer of 2004, PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel renounced its self-proclaimed ceasefire and threatened to renew its separatist struggle in both Turkey's Southeast and urban centers. Turkish press subsequently reported multiple incidents in the Southeast of PKK/ KADEK/Kongra Gel terrorist actions or clashes between Turkish security forces and PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel militants.[2]

The Crisis Group Estimate

The Crisis Group concluded in early 2006 that Islamist groups had come to dominate the Sunni Arab insurgency and developed the following list of key groups:[3]

- *Tandhim al-Qa'ida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* (al-Qa'ida's Organisation in Mesopotamia). Formerly *al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* (Monotheism and Jihad), the group has been shaped by the personality of its purported founder, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The group claims to have 15 brigades or battalions (*Katiba,* plural *Kata'ib*) operating under its banner, including two "martyrs" brigades, of which one allegedly is comprised exclusively of Iraqi volunteers.
- *Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna* (Partisans of the Sunna Army).[4] The group reportedly is an offshoot of *Jaysh Ansar al-Islam* (the Partisans of Islam Army); it is a *jihadi* organization previously based in Kurdistan and which by most accounts has ceased to operate in Iraq. (Tellingly, a group claiming affiliation with *Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna, Jaysh al-Sunna wal-Jama'a* publishes a magazine in Kurdish.) The group claims to have some 16 brigades. It has committed some particularly violent attacks.
- *Al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq* (the Islamic Army in Iraq). Thirteen brigades have claimed allegiance to this group. Again, the group's highly Salafi discourse blends with a vigorously patriotic tone. It is widely seen both in Iraq and in the West as one of the armed groups that is more "nationalist" in character and more likely to turn away from armed struggle if a suitably inclusive political compromise is possible. The authors of the Crisis Group study disagree and argue, "The perception that *al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq* comprises chiefly former regime officers while *Tandhim al-Qa'ida* is a gathering of foreign militants is misleading. Undoubtedly, *Tandhim* has tapped into foreign volunteers who are ready to die, but the logistics of suicide attacks (smuggling, hosting, training, and equipping volunteers, gathering intelligence on targets, etc.) require solid rooting in Iraqi society and capabilities Iraqis alone can provide. The make-up of *al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq* may well involve a core of experienced Iraqi officers and other

members of the former regime, but unseasoned and devout combatants, as well as Iraqi salafi preachers with connections throughout the Muslim world ought not be excluded. Indeed, such mixed composition, as well as cross dependencies (jihadists rely on local networks, and on international sources of finance and legitimacy), help explain in part the relative homogeneity in discourse."[5]

- *Al-Jabha al-Islamiya lil-Muqawama al-'Iraqiya* (the Islamic Front of the Iraqi Resistance), known by its initials as *Jami'* (mosque or gathering). This group could be more akin to a "public relations organ" shared between different armed groups rather than an armed group in itself. Issuing regular, weekly updates of claimed attacks, it also has a comprehensive Web site and publishes a lengthy, monthly magazine also called *Jami'*. Deeply nationalistic, but with a slight Salafi taint, its discourse counts among the more sophisticated of the groups.
- *Jaysh al-Rashidin* (the First Four Caliphates Army). As many as six brigades reportedly operate under its banner. The group issues regular updates on its activities and of late has recently set up a Web site.
- *Jaysh al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura* (the Victorious Army Group). At least three brigades are known to have pledged alliance to this group, which also issues weekly updates.
- *Jaysh al-Mujahidin* (the Mujahidin's Army). This group, too, puts out weekly updates and operates a Web site, which was briefly shut down and suspended in December 2005.
- *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya fil-'Iraq* (the Islamic Resistance's Movement in Iraq), which at some stage *Kata'ib Thawrat 'Ashrin* (the 1920 Revolution Brigades) appears to have joined.
- *Jaysh Muhammad* (Muhammad's Army), which issues periodic communiqués and videos focusing on improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in the Anbar governorate.
- *'Asa'ib Ahl al-'Iraq* (the Clans of the People of Iraq).
- *Saraya Al-Ghadhab Al-Islami* (the Islamic Anger Brigades)
- *Saraya Usud Al-Tawhid* (the Lions of Unification Brigades)
- *Saraya Suyuf al-Haqq* (the Swords of Justice Brigades). This group took responsibility for the November 2005 kidnapping of four peace activists from the Christian Peacemaking Team. Its origins and affiliation remain murky, although it claims to operate under the banner of *Jaysh al-Sunna wal-Jama'a*, a recent offshoot of *Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna*.

It is important to note that the Crisis Group created this list largely on the basis of the public statements by various insurgent groups and that the groups on the list differed significantly in history and credibility. The first five groups were seen as having significant operational status. The second four consisted of groups that took credit for military actions but which tended to use far less elaborate and stable channels of communication than the above four, although their public statements showed beliefs similar to those of *al-Jaysh al-Islami* and *Jami'*. The last four groups "lack regular means of communication and rely instead on periodic claims of responsibility through statements or videos."[6]

The Crisis Group also described some 50 different "brigades" that had carried out military action or terrorist attacks under the name of one major group or the other by December 2005. It reported, however, "In traditional Arab military parlance, a brigade comprises from 100 to 300 men, which would add up to a total force of only 5,000 to 15,000 insurgents."[7]

By the time the Crisis Group issued its report in February 2006, none of the Sunni Islamist extremist groups it had listed had made open, formal attacks on Shi'ite sectarianism, but virtually all had repeatedly attacked Shi'ite targets. All had also made repeated efforts to establish their credibility by providing detailed military and terrorist operations. They acted out of "Islamic honor" and tended to downplay or ignore their worst actions; they attacked U.S. and Iraqi government actions for crimes and atrocities and accused the Shi'ites and Kurds of sectarian and ethnic separatism—ignoring their own focus on Shi'ite and Kurdish targets. It was the Shi'ites and not the Kurds, however, that they generally accused of using death squads, committing crimes, and fighting "dirty wars."

The exact ideological belief structure of the various neo-Salafi and other Islamist extremist groups was hard to characterize and often was of only limited operational relevance. They all were far more movements of political and military activists than theologians. As such, they were not puritans in the sense of Wahhabi, nor were they Salafis in the traditional sense of the word. While they were "Islamist," they were not so much religious as committed to a violent struggle for their beliefs. Their foreign leaders and cadres were created in past wars, and their Iraqi members were created since the Coalition invasion of Iraq.

Religion, sect, and subsect were clearly factors in shaping the composition of these groups and extending their reach into the Iraqi population. There were reports, however, that some more mainstream Sunni nationalists joined ranks with these neo-Salafi groups in Iraq. Mowaffak al-Rubaie, Iraq's National Security Advisor, was quoted as saying, "Religion is a strong motive. You are not going to find someone who is going to die for Ba'athists. But Salafists have a very strong message. If you use the Koran selectively, it could be a weapon of mass destruction."[8]

Neo-Salafi extremists consistently use religious rhetoric in Iraq and try to link the conflict in Iraq to other Muslim struggles in Palestine, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Kashmir. Their statements and recruitment tapes often started with references to these conflicts and tied their "struggle" in Iraq as part of the worldwide Islam versus the West conflict.

These violent Sunni neo-Salafi and other Sunni Islamist extremist groups also differed from other Sunni insurgents in their willingness to use violence against noncombatants and the innocent and in their willingness to use violence against other Muslims. They were far more willing to use extreme methods of violence, like suicide bombs, against Shi'ite and Kurdish targets. They were equally willing to use these methods of attack against Iraqi officials and Iraqis in the military, security, and police services and Iraqis of all religious and ethnic backgrounds who did not support them in their interpretation of jihad.

Most were willing to act on the principle that ordinary Iraqi citizens could be sacrificed in a war fought in God's cause. These Sunni Islamic extremists were fighting a war that extended throughout the world, not simply in Iraq, and their goals affected all Arab states and all of Islam.

It also seemed clear that many such insurgent groups did not believe they had to "win" in Iraq, at least in any conventional sense of the term. They did not need to restore Sunni power or control, at least in the near term. Simply driving the United States and its Coalition allies out of Iraq in a war of attrition was seen as a key goal and would be seen as a major strategic victory.

Some saw an outcome that left Iraq in a state of prolonged civil war, and forced a spreading regional conflict in Islam between Sunnis and other sects, and between neo-Salafists and other Sunnis, as the beginning of a broader eschatological conflict they believed was inevitable and that God would ensure they won. They were not fighting a limited war—at least in terms of their ultimate ends and means. Compromise was at best a temporary action forced upon them for the purposes of expediency.

Neo-Salafi extremists also saw the insurgency as part of a general war for the control and soul of Islam, rather than Iraq. If anything, they ultimately gained the most if the Sunni and Shi'ite worlds divided, if Iraq became the continuing scene of violence between the United States and Arabs, if U.S. forces remained tied down, and if their actions created as much regional instability as possible.

This meant there were no clear limits to the willingness of some of the more extreme Sunni Arab insurgent elements to escalate, even when it came to dividing the nation into a civil war that they most likely could not win. They were also likely to escalate even further as their situation became more threatened.

This helps explain why neo-Salafi extremist groups, such as that of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, were the main causes of suicide bombings and mass attacks on civilians, especially the ones directed against the Shi'ites. Al-Zarqawi had been ambiguous in his statements regarding attacking other Muslims and issued various statements, some of which sanctioned attacks on Iraqi Shi'ites, and others that emphasized that such casualties should be avoided, but his organization never halted attacks on Muslims.

Until September 2005, most Sunni Islamist extremist groups were generally careful to avoid any open claims of a split with Iraqi Shi'ites. After that point, many carried out mass attacks and bombings on Shi'ites, and they repeatedly showed that they placed few—if any—limits on the means of violence against those they regarded as enemies of Islam.

It is important to note that these belief structures made negotiation and deterrence difficult to impossible. The belief structure of such groups meant that many cadres and leaders could not be persuaded, only defeated. Furthermore, they remained alienated and violent, almost regardless of what the government and other Sunnis and Sunni insurgents did.

This steady trend toward civil conflict is seen in the 2006 Department of State *Country Reports on Terrorism.* The report said the following of Iraq:

Iraq remained at the center of the War on Terror with the Iraqi Government and the Coalition battling al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) and affiliated terrorist organizations, insurgent groups fighting against Coalition Forces (CF), militias and death squads increasingly engaged in sectarian violence, and criminal organizations taking advantage of Iraq's deteriorating security situation. Terrorist organizations and insurgent groups continued to attack CF primarily using Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs). The Iraqi government universally condemned terrorist groups and supported CF against AQI and its affiliates.

The June 7 death of AQI's leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, damaged the group's leadership but did not diminish attacks against Coalition Forces and Iraqis nor did it halt overall increasing attack trends by the group. AQI's new leader is Abu Ayyub al-Masri, also known as Abu Hamza al-Muhajir. January press reports indicated that AQI teamed with several smaller Sunni Islamist groups devoted to continuing the insurgency calling themselves the Mujahideen Shura Council. By the end of the year, this group had renamed itself the Islamic State of Iraq. AQ and affiliated groups continued attacks on Iraq's infrastructure and claimed responsibility for kidnappings and attacks against Coalition Forces.

The Government of Iraq sponsored reconciliation programs to reduce the sources of violence. The government organized conferences involving tribal and religious leaders, politicians, and civil society organizations to counter support for terrorist organizations and to promote dialogue between Iraq's ethnic and religious groups in an effort to decrease violence. Tribal leaders in Ramadi, a volatile city in Anbar province, banded together late in the year and pledged to fight against AQ instead of the Coalition. While the tribal leaders' full effectiveness remained uncertain, this represented an important step.

Iraq's sectarian divide increased dramatically following the February 22 bombing of the al-Askariyah Mosque, one of the holiest sites to Shia Muslims, located in Salah ad Din province. While violence against both CF and Iraqis had increased prior to the bombing, this event exacerbated sectarian tensions and led to increased violence in Iraq's ethnically-mixed areas, especially Baghdad. Sectarian attacks, including car bombs, suicide vests, sniper fire, targeted assassinations, and death squad murders, occurred on a close-to-daily basis with Iraqi civilians suffering the majority of causalities. Iraq's sectarian violence furthered the terrorists' goals by creating instability and weakening the government.

Neighboring countries, specifically Iran, continued to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs by allowing, condoning, or in some cases, actively smuggling weapons, people, materials, and money to terrorist, insurgent, and militia groups inside Iraq. Iranian agents and sympathizers utilized an 800-mile long, porous border with limited security to transport goods, which increasingly included Iranian-made weapons such as IEDs or their components, which proved effective in attacks against Coalition Forces.

In recent statements, Iraqi government leaders, including the Prime Minister, the President and the Foreign Minister, have called on neighboring countries to stop interfering in Iraq's internal affairs and to stop supporting elements actively fighting against Iraq's elected government. Syria's Foreign Minister traveled to Baghdad and agreed to cooperate more closely on border security in an effort to reduce the number of foreign fighters entering Iraq. Senior Iraqi officials, including Iraqi President Talabani, traveled to Iran throughout the year encouraging the Iranian government

to support Iraq's political process and to stop material support of terrorist groups and militias.

To demonstrate that the Iraqi government does not wish to allow Iraq to become a safe haven for terrorist organizations, Prime Minister al-Maliki appointed the Minister of State for National Security, Shirwan al-Waeli, as the Iraq coordinator for issues involving the Kurdistan Workers Party (Kongra-Gel/PKK), a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. Tension between Turkey and the Iraqi government increased as Turkish leaders expressed increasing frustration at what they viewed as Iraq's inaction against the PKK.

Although Iraq is a proven ally in the War on Terror, Iraq's developing security and armed forces will require further training and resources before they can effectively address the terrorist groups already operating within their borders. Iraq's intelligence services continued to improve in both competency and confidence, but they also will require additional support before they will be able to adequately identify and respond to internal and external terrorist threats. The international community's support for investment and reconstruction are critical components needed to ensure that the Government of Iraq's plans to reduce violence, improve services, and increase economic opportunities are successful.[9]

The Areas of Major Sunni Insurgent Influence

The main Sunni insurgent groups have been concentrated in cities ranging from areas like Mosul and Baghdad; in Sunni-populated areas like the "Sunni triangle," the Al Anbar Province to the west of Baghdad, and the so-called "Triangle of Death" to the southeast of Baghdad; Diyala Province north of Baghdad; and in Sunni areas near the Iraqi and Turkish border. As a result, four of Iraq's provinces had both a major insurgency threat and a major insurgent presence, although Sunni insurgents have repeatedly carried out successful major bombings and attacks in Shi'ite, Kurdish, and other mixed areas. (At the same time, they continued to lack the ideological cohesion and operational coordination necessary to mobilize Iraqi Sunni Arabs with any optimal effect.) They did not succeed in establishing long-term control over "safe havens" from which to operate, and Coalition assaults disrupted continuous insurgent control in such areas and the creation of insurgent sanctuaries.

Sunni insurgents exerted considerable sway at various points in Fallujah, Rawa, Ana, Haditha, Ramadi, Rutbah, Qaim, Ubaydi, Karabilah, Haqlaniyah, Barwanah, Tal Afar, Baquba, and others. Furthermore, as Coalition forces turned over control to largely ineffective Iraqi security forces, insurgents were able to return to some areas and establish some operational safe havens.

Al-Anbar—a major center of the Sunni insurgency—was both Iraq's largest province (roughly the size of Belgium) and one of its least populated—roughly 1 million people out of Iraq's 27 million. It was at least 90 percent Sunni Arab—a number that only rose with sectarian segregation—offered a route to a potential sanctuary in Syria, and had borders with Jordan and Saudi Arabia as well. Fallujah, and the other "belt" cities to the north and west of Baghdad, the area immediately surrounding the Euphrates, and its agricultural areas became a key operating area for insurgents. So

did the towns along the Iraqi-Syrian border, where insurgents took advantage of the desert and rough terrain for smuggling and dispersal. While it had some major cities, it had long been a tribal area where the government exercised limited control. Given these factors, it was scarcely surprising that it was a center of the Sunni insurgency.

Guessing at Their Strength

No one has ever been able to reliably estimate how many such neo-Salafi extremists there have been in the field. The same is true of estimates of exactly how many movements and cells were involved. The most visible neo-Salafi groups have been a mix of affiliates including Sunni Islamist groups like al-Qa'ida and Ansar al-Sunna and more nationalist or Ba'athist groups like the Victorious Army Group. More than 35 groups have existed at various times. Some sources have put this number at over 100, but these totals seemed to include mere fronts and Sunni groups that are more secular or affiliated with the Ba'ath.

A study of Internet Web sites and postings by the Search for International Terrorist Entities (SITE) Institute in late 2005 found more than 100 groups existed in various proclamations and Sunni Islamist Web sites. Of these, SITE found that al-Qa'ida had 36 and Ansar al-Sunna had 59. Another eight groups operated under the direction of the Victorious Army Group, and another five groups worked under the 20th of July Revolution Brigade.[10]

Work by the Crisis Group found at least 14 largely neo-Salafi groups' Web pages published in February 2006 and that large numbers of brigades and formations existed that had some degree of autonomy or independence. It also found that the major groups were loosely linked in an informal "Majlis," although it is unclear how real such a body was, how often it met, or what it did.[11]

The major groups did have considerable internal structure and organization. They had cadres of leaders, planners, financers, and "armorers." It was clear that al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia sometimes claimed attacks that were coordinated by different elements. For example, an October 24, 2005, attack on the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels in central Baghdad was claimed by the "Attack Brigade," the "Rockets Brigade," and "Al Baraa bin Malik Suicide Brigade." It was far from clear who was really involved. As these names indicated, some groups also seemed to specialize in given types of attacks, and others on given types of targets. Some, for example, seemed to attack only Coalition targets while others attacked Iraqi elements, such as the Shi'ite Badr Organization on the grounds that its members attack Sunnis.

Insurgent groups acted alone or claimed affiliation with other organizations. Some, such as the Ansar, or "Suicide," Brigade, created confusion because its name implied its members were of one group but claimed affiliation with another.

The high degree of compartmentalization, isolation, and independence between and within these movements not only helped protect them and enabled them to operate as informal distributed networks, it made their strength fluid and extremely hard to estimate. As Bruce Hoffman of the RAND Corporation pointed out, "There is no center of gravity, no leadership, no hierarchy; they are more a constellation than

an organization. They have adopted a structure that assures their longevity."[12] Abdul Kareem al-Eniezi, the Minister for National Security, has said, "The leaders usually don't have anything to do with details. . . Sometimes they will give the smaller groups a target, or a type of target. The groups aren't connected to each other. They are not that organized."[13]

When it came to estimating the number of neo-Salafi and other Sunni Islamist extremist groups relative to other insurgents, some experts have "guesstimated" the number of Islamist extremist insurgents at as little 5–10 percent of the total insurgents without being able to say what base number they were a percent of or distinguishing core insurgents from part-timers or sympathizers.

U.S. experts and officers sometimes made reference to a total of 20,000–30,000 insurgents of all kinds during 2004 and 2005, but such experts were among the first to state that these numbers were more nominal midpoints in a range of guesses than real estimates. Other experts estimated the total number of Sunni insurgents and active sympathizer insurgents of all kinds at totals from 15,000 to 60,000, with far larger numbers of additional passive sympathizers. These estimates were no more precise and credible in 2006 and 2007. The reality is that the "experts" simply did not know.

Estimates of full-time hardcore Sunni Islamist extremists were equally uncertain. Anthony Loyd of the *London Times* stated in September 2005, "An intelligence summary, citing the conglomeration of insurgent groups under the al-Qa'ida banner to be the result of rebel turf wars, money, weaponry and fear, concluded that of the estimated 16,000 Sunni Muslim insurgents, 6,700 were hardcore Islamic fundamentalists who were now supplemented by a possible further 4,000 members after an amalgamation with Jaysh Muhammad, previously an insurgent group loyal to the former Ba'athist regime."[14]

Once again estimates of key cadres and core activists have not improved over time or provided credible estimates of trends. Given the difficulty in distinguishing core activists from part-time or fringe activists, all such estimates have done little more than highlight the level of uncertainty surrounding a number of key aspects of the insurgency.

SHI'ITE MILITIAS

The second major group of players in Iraq's violence came to be the Shi'ite militias. There was a wide range of small forces protecting Shi'ite parties and leaders and operating at the local level. Two main Shi'ite militias, however, helped shaped the civil conflict: the Badr Organization and the Mahdi Army (*Jaish al-Mahdi*). While the Badr Organization was formed prior to the U.S.–led invasion, the Mahdi Army developed largely after 2003 and came to play the larger role. There were many differences between these two militias, but one of the most important was their base of support. The Badr Organization was more powerful in southern Iraq and received at least some support from Iran, where its leaders fled for much of the 1980s and 1990s. The Mahdi Army, in contrast, had its base of support in Sadr City in

Baghdad—a traditionally poor Shi'ite district of 2 million who had suffered from a lack of basic services during Saddam's regime. The differences between the two militias, and their political affiliates, were the source of much tension and often turned violent.

The Role of the Badr Organization

The Badr Organization, and its precursor the Badr Brigade, was created by the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and was trained and equipped by the Iranian military from the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) to the Coalition invasion in 2003. The armed component of SCIRI was supposedly dispersed in 2004 by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the head of SCIRI. Some of its manpower went into the Iraqi security forces, and the name of the brigade was changed to the "Badr Organization." In practice, however, it remained an armed militia, one that came to recruit and expand in reaction to the Sunni insurgency. In May 2007 SCIRI officially changed its name to the Supreme Islamic Council in Iraq, stating that the group had achieved its main objective of "revolution," or eliminating Saddam's regime.[15]

GlobalSecurity.org said of SCIRI:

> The Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), a Shi'i resistance group also known as the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI), was formed in Iran in 1982 to provide an opposition to Iraqi aggression against Iran. Following the Iran-Iraq war, the organization continued to operate with the aim of toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein. SCIRI was directly supported with funds by Tehran and with arms by Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard. The movement advocated theocratic rule for Iraq and conducted a low-level, cross-border guerrilla war against the regime of Saddam Hussein.
>
> By the late 1990s SCIRI had about 4,000–8,000 fighters, composed of Iraqi Shiite exiles and prisoners of war, operating against the Iraqi military in southern Iraq. Although SCIRI has distanced itself from Iran to some extent, Iran's Revolutionary Guard reportedly continues to provide it with weapons and training.[16]

The United States Institute for Peace summarized the history of SCIRI and its military arm as follows:

> SCIRI, formed in Iran in 1982 by Iraqi exiles there, is almost wholly Arab Shi'ah in composition, although it has added some Shi'ah Turkmen and Shi'ah Kurds to the mix. As its unwieldy title indicates, SCIRI was designed to gather several Shi'ah groups, including Da'wah and Islamic Action (Amal Islamiyyah) parties, under one umbrella. Although it was headed by an executive committee consisting of representatives of these parties, power soon gravitated into the hands of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, son of the former grand ayatollah, Muhsin al-Hakim, and an original participant in the Da'wah movement in Iraq, who became its driving force. In time the participation of the other Shi'ah parties diminished or evaporated, and SCIRI became essentially Hakim's vehicle.

> In the crucible of the Iran-Iraq war and under Iranian tutelage, SCIRI developed an elaborate organizational structure, with numerous administrative bureaus to manage everything from finance to public relations, together with a broader-based congress to function as a sort of parliament. It also developed a military arm, the Badr Brigade, trained and, to some extent, officered by Iranians, which grew to about ten thousand members by the end of that war. SCIRI also took in a number of the Iraqi POWs in Iran who reportedly "repented" and joined the new Islamic movement; these were known as Tawwabin (Repenters). SCIRI was well funded by Iran, as was its Badr Brigade, which took part in the war against Iraq, on the Iranian side.[17]

As Iraq devolved into civil war, Sunnis asserted that the Badr Organization was responsible for the targeting and assassination of a number of senior Sunni clerics, many from the Muslim Scholars' Board. There is no doubt that many of these charges are true, and that they are true of some of the SCIRI and Badr forces that joined the Iraqi security forces. It is important to note, however, that SCIRI's al-Hakim consistently claimed to support conciliation, worked with the United States, and participated in the Iraqi government and political process. He has been equally consistent in denying that the Badr Organization plays a violent role and in blaming all violence on Sunni insurgents.

The Role of Moqtada al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army

The other leading Shi'ite militia, Moqtada al-Sadr's "Mahdi Army," evolved after the fall of Saddam. Unlike most Iraqi religious leaders who were "quietists" and believed the clergy should play only a limited role in politics, Moqtada al-Sadr was an activist who played a controversial yet powerful political role since the fall of Saddam Hussein. He is related to Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Al-Sadr and Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr: two of Iraq's greatest activist clerics, both of whom were killed by Saddam Hussein, and to whom Moqtada owed much of his success.

The Sadr family had accumulated power and influence in the Shi'ite world for centuries, but was most well known in the twentieth century for challenging the quietist tradition. Baqir al-Sadr achieved religious academic success. However, Baqir expressed radical ideas instead of aspiring to leadership of the *Hawza* (institution of Islamic learning). He emphasized government of the jurisprudent, or government under Islamic law. Citing the impotence of the quietists, Baqir and his followers challenged tradition and started the movement that paved the way for Moqtada's success. The Ba'ath regime felt the threat of Baqir, and in 1979 it killed many of his followers and a year later, Baqir.

Baqir's cousin, Sadiq al-Sadr emerged in 1993 to continue the antiquietist movement. Ironically, the regime decided that Sadiq would make a placid Shi'ite leader and supported him as the new Ayatollah. Sadiq's power over the Shi'ite community allowed him to progressively relaunch his cousin's antiquietist campaign. Sadiq united the political and military arenas with the religious. He became actively

involved in the lives of the people and listened to their struggles. Sadiq created vast popular support among poor Shi'ites.

In 1999 Saddam Hussein had Sadiq assassinated, along with his two eldest sons. Sadiq's legacy was a movement and ideology that gave Shi'ites hope and a reason to search for their identities, despite continued adversity. He also embraced a sense of Islamic unity often proclaiming, "There is no Sunna and no Shia. Yes to Islamic unity!"[18] The split between quietists and Sadr activists was solidified by the time the United States invaded in 2003.

Moqtada al-Sadr used this base to accumulate popular support among poor Shi'ites following the invasion, but he did so without pursuing the traditional route to Shi'ite religious status. Al-Sadr did so in spite of the fact that he had no previous political base and had never ascended to the highest levels of religious scholarship, received little if any foreign backing, and lacked a financial base. His father, Sadiq al-Sadr, had appointed Ayatollah Kadhim al-Ha'iri as his successor. Al-Ha'iri had lived in Iran since the 1970s, however, and when he was appointed successor in 1999, he issued Moqtada responsibilities that would normally have been given only to a *marja* (a senior Hawza scholar): issuing *fatwas* (jurisprudential announcements) and receiving *khums* (alms).

Al-Sadr's activism, youth, and challenge to the United States and Iraq's traditional power structure did, however, quickly give him a strong following among the Shi'ite poor and students. Quietist clerics and other Shi'ite political leaders did not offer effective forms of representation to poorer Shi'ites or offer them hope, immediate benefits, and security. Many Shi'ites turned to al-Sadr for direction. As his popularity grew, Moqtada "gave voice to a proud, authentic popular identity while advocating violent struggle against the root causes of oppression."[19]

Many of al-Sadr's followers acquired a reputation for lawlessness or violence in the months following the invasion. Al-Sadr was accused of having a hand in the murder of rival Shi'ite clerics like the Grand Ayatollah Abd al-Majid al-Khoi on April 10, 2003. He also encouraged violence by denouncing the U.S. presence in Iraq and members of the Iraqi interim government.

He steadily strengthened his militia—the Mahdi Army—as Sunni insurgent pressure pushed the Shi'ites toward civil war. The Mahdi Army ballooned in size after the February 22, 2006, bombing of the holy Shi'ite Askariya shrine in Samarra and played a primary role in "soft" sectarian cleansing and the civil war. By the end of 2006, some estimates indicated that Sadr could call on some 60,000 fighters across Iraq, but his main base of support was in the traditionally poorer sections of Baghdad.

KURDISH PARTIES AND THE KURDISH MILITIAS

The Kurdish parties and militias played a much less direct role in open violence in Iraq after the fall of Saddam. The primary Kurdish interest lay in preserving Kurdish autonomy, and the more limited objective of expanding Kurdish control. At the

same time, they polarized ethnic differences in the north, especially along the "ethnic fault lines" between Kurds and Sunnis.

The two major Kurdish parties were the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), headed by Masoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), headed by Jalal Talabani. Both retained powerful militias after the fall of Saddam Hussein, known collectively as the Peshmerga. Their strength was difficult to estimate, and some elements either operated in Iraqi forces or had been trained by U.S. advisors. The Iraqi Kurds could have probably assembled a force in excess of 10,000 fighters —albeit of very different levels of training and equipment.

The Kurdish Peshmerga troops traced their origins to the Iraqi civil wars of the 1920s. They fought against the Saddam Hussein regime during the Iran-Iraq War and supported U.S. and Coalition military action in 2003. The Peshmerga groups of the PUK and the KDP served as the primary security force for the Kurdish regional government. The PUK and the KDP claim that there were 100,000 Peshmerga troops, and they insisted on keeping the Peshmerga intact as guarantors of Kurdish security and political self-determination.

3

Postconflict to Initial Insurgency: May 1, 2003–End 2003

April–May 2003	There is widespread looting in Baghdad and a sharp increase in low-level criminal activity. The U.S. military does not have sufficient forces to control the breakdown in security. The lack of a phase IV plan becomes apparent.
May 1, 2003	President George W. Bush declares an end to major combat operations in Iraq.
May 12, 2003	Ambassador L. Paul Bremer arrives in Iraq and establishes the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). He replaces Ret. Lt. Gen. Jay Garner, head of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance for Iraq.
May 16, 2003	L. Paul Bremer issues CPA Order Number 1, De-Ba'athification of Iraq.
May 19, 2003	Thousands of Shi'ites, apparently organized by the cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, peacefully march through Baghdad to protest the American occupation.
May 23, 2003	L. Paul Bremer issues CPA Order Number 2, Dissolution of Entities, which dissolves the Iraqi forces.
Summer 2003	The United States denies that the insurgency is a guerrilla war and emphasizes that the attacks come from former regime elements and "bitter enders." Gen. Tommy Franks retires from commander of United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) and Gen. John Abizaid takes command. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez becomes commander of U.S. forces in Iraq.

June 12, 2003 An AH-64 Apache helicopter is downed in western Iraq; it is the first U.S. helicopter to be brought down by enemy fire since the fall of the Hussein regime. The two pilots escape unhurt.

June 12, 2003 The first attack occurs on a pipeline in northern Iraq that supplies crude oil to Turkey.

June 15, 2003 Hundreds of American soldiers sweep through Fallujah in an operation called "Desert Scorpion." The operation is intended to defeat organized Iraqi resistance. An average of approximately one U.S. soldier has been killed per day since May 1.

July 22, 2003 U.S. Special Forces kill Uday and Qusay Hussein in Mosul. Special Forces, backed by 200 regular Army soldiers and several helicopters, storm a villa after receiving a tip from an Iraqi source. The Hussein brothers die along with a bodyguard and Qusay's teenage son. Four Americans are wounded in the operation.

August 7, 2003 A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens.

August 19, 2003 A truck bomb explodes outside UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing 24 people, including the head of the UN mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello. More than 100 are injured. The dead also include the Iraqi coordinator for the UN children's fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers. This attack, and the attack on the Jordanian Embassy, was later attributed to al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia associates.

August 29, 2003 An explosion at a Najaf mosque kills 95, including one of Iraq's most prominent Shi'ite leaders, Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim. Another 125 are wounded.

Early Fall 2003 Suicide bombings and attacks against Iraqis increase. The first neo-Salafi elements of the insurgency become apparent as foreign *jihadists* enter Iraq through the Syrian border. The United States continues to ignore these developments and focus on ex-Ba'athists.

October 9, 2003 A suicide bomber rams his car into a police station in Baghdad, killing nine.

October 12, 2003 A suicide car bombing near the Baghdad Hotel kills 8 and wounds 32.

October 14, 2003 A suicide car bomb explodes outside the Turkish Embassy in Baghdad, killing 1 Iraqi and wounding at least 13. In an apparent change of strategy, insurgents are targeting supporters of the Coalition rather than U.S. troops.

October 27, 2003	Four suicide bombings target International Red Cross headquarters and four Iraqi police stations in Baghdad, killing 40 people, mostly Iraqis.
November 2, 2003	In the single deadliest strike on U.S. forces since the war began, guerrillas shoot down an American Chinook helicopter six miles south of Fallujah, killing 16 U.S. soldiers and injuring 21 others.
November 15, 2003	The CPA and the Iraqi Governing Council reach an agreement on the "November 15 Document" that outlines a timeline for transition to Iraqi sovereignty.
December 13, 2003	Saddam Hussein is captured by American troops. The former dictator is found hiding in a hole near Tikrit, his hometown. He surrenders without a fight.
December 27, 2003	Guerrillas attack government buildings and foreign military bases in Karbala with car bombs, mortars, and guns. Nineteen Iraqis die; 120 are wounded.

The mistakes the Coalition made before and during the effort to drive Saddam Hussein from power were compounded by the mistakes it made as the insurgency unfolded. The U.S.–led Coalition initially sought to impose its own rule on Iraq and tried to restrict the development of Iraqi armed forces to a token force geared to defend Iraq's borders against external aggression.

The Coalition was slow to understand that only an effective Iraqi government, effective Iraqi forces, and enough internal, political conciliation to limit the incentives for sectarian and ethnic violence would be seen as legitimate and avoid growing Iraqi hostility. At the same time, it failed to understand the scale of the sectarian and ethnic divisions Iraq faced and that the Coalition had favored Iraqi exiles and the Kurds in ways that pushed many Sunnis into active opposition.

During 2003 and early 2004 U.S. policy makers and many in the U.S. military lived in a state of near denial about the rise of terrorism and insurgency. The United States assumed for much of the first year after the fall of Saddam Hussein that it was dealing with a limited number of insurgents that Coalition forces would defeat well before the election. It did not see the threat level that would emerge if it did not provide jobs or pensions for Iraqi career officers or co-opt them into the nation-building effort.

The United States and the Coalition were slow to see that some form of transition payments were necessary for the young Iraqi soldiers, as well as other Iraqi young men, who faced massive, nationwide unemployment. The United States failed to acknowledge the true scale of the insurgent threat and the extent to which popular resentment of Coalition forces would rise if it did not act immediately to rebuild a convincing mix of Iraqi military and security forces.

The United States and its allies downplayed the scale of sectarian and ethnic divisions and failed to establish the proper political conditions to reduce Iraqi popular

resentment of the Coalition forces and create a political climate that would ease the task of replacing them with effective Iraqi forces. It failed to make it clear to the Iraqi people that the United States and Britain had no economic ambitions in Iraq and would not establish permanent bases, or keep Iraqi forces weak to ensure their control.

Iraqis, too, however, failed to see the growing risks of sectarian and ethnic conflict. Shi'ites and Kurds helped push Sunnis toward violence and extremism. They supported an extreme form of de-Ba'athification that excluded Sunnis from political power and the government and acted in ways that forced many moderate Sunnis out of the government and military because they had joined the Ba'ath regime to survive. Outside Sunni neo-Salafi Islamists, some who later affiliated themselves with al-Qa'ida, used sectarian and ethnic divisions to largely take over the insurgency and seek to provoke large-scale civil war to drive out the Coalition and to create a level of instability they could exploit to take power.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Sunni insurgents emerged as a growing threat, gained significant popular support in Arab Sunni areas, and developed a steadily more sophisticated mix of tactics. As Michael Knights notes in *Cradle of Conflict: Iraq and the Birth of Modern U.S. Military Power,* the postwar phase in Iraq was a period that "was badly blotched by a combination of planning and bureaucratic shortfalls."[1] He argues that two postwar factors combined to fuel the Iraqi insurgency. The first was the lack of basic provision by the occupying powers for services and security, and the second was the exacerbation of Sunnis' fears that they would be excluded from the political process.[2]

Steven Metz has similar views of the link between the growth of the insurgency and the failures made by U.S forces during the postwar period. Referring to the situation in Iraq, he writes, "An insurgency is born when a power fails to address social or regional polarization, sectarianism, endemic corruption, crime, various forms of radicalism, or rising expectations. The margin of error is narrower for an outside occupying power than for an inept or repressive national regime as people tend to find mistakes or bad behavior by one of their own more tolerable than that of an outsider."[3]

There were more basic failures in mischaracterizing the level and nature of violence as it emerged. The U.S. military and intelligence effort in the field only began to understand that the insurgent threat was serious and growing in the fall of 2003. Senior U.S. officials and officers kept referring to the attackers as "terrorists," kept issuing estimates that they could not number more than 5,000, and said they were a mixture of outside elements and diehard former regime loyalists who had little popular support. The United States largely ignored the warnings various opinion polls provided about the unpopularity of the war and the Coalition. It claimed that Coalition political, economic, and security efforts were either successful or would soon become so. In short, the United States failed to honestly assess the facts on the ground in a manner all too reminiscent of Vietnam.

THE ROLE OF IRAQI POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN CREATING THE INSURGENCY

The initial political planning process focused heavily on Iraqi exiles, most of whom had spent years outside the country and were out of touch with the Iraqi public. Chief among these exiles was Ahmed Chalabi, who had played a role in planning the invasion of Iraq. The United States brought Chalabi and his militia, the Free Iraqi Fighters, to Iraq in early April 2003 and expected him to play a large role in forming the core of the new Iraqi government.[4] Chalabi was an avid proponent of the total de-Ba'athification of Iraq and the dissolution of the Iraqi Army.

Chalabi also become part of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), a 25-member group of Iraqi leaders approved by L. Paul Bremer in July 2003 and charged with transitioning the country to democracy. The IGC had representation from Iraq's three major factions (Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Kurds), but the rotating presidency included only two Sunnis and one nonexile.[5] For the remainder of 2003, the IGC would struggle to find compromise among its members while the CPA retained the real authority in Iraq.

The U.S. failure to have a clear phase IV plan for stability operations and nation building also meant that transfer of power to Iraq was needlessly delayed. Through the summer of 2003, the CPA maintained that Iraq would benefit more from a slow, steady transfer of sovereignty. One of the strongest voices in Iraq opposing a long occupation was Shi'ite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Al-Sistani advocated holding immediate elections and putting an Iraqi face on politics. The United States, however, did not make the decision to hold elections until October 2003.

The complete control of Iraq by the CPA and the failure to include "nonexile" Iraqis in the early nation-building efforts solidified the image of the United States as an "occupation" force for many Iraqis, particularly the Sunnis. The lack of Sunni representation in the IGC, coupled with the de-Ba'athication laws, portrayed the image that the Sunnis would have little or no role in the future Iraq. The growing insurgency clearly used these failures to its advantage and portrayed the United States as an imperial occupier that sought to marginalize Sunnis and destroy their power and prestige.

The fault was scarcely that of the United States alone. The Iraqi Shi'ites and Kurds involved in the early political process also helped create the insurgency and civil conflict. They supported extreme forms of de-Ba'athification and pressed it on Ambassador Bremer. They tried to limit the number of Sunnis allowed on the IGC. They failed to see the devastating consequences of alienating much of the educated class, including scientists, educators, and health-care professionals, many of whom had joined the Ba'athist Party as a means of survival.

Shi'ite leaders were the worst voices pressing for a hard-line approach, but the Kurds also exploited U.S. favoritism. The U.S. military had enforced the Kurdish autonomous zone in northern Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War. The Kurds supported the U.S. invasion and expected to keep their special status in the eyes of American foreign policy. The Kurds had greater representation on the IGC than Sunnis,

although they were a smaller percentage of the population. Kurdish leaders also regularly traveled to the United States to meet with top administration officials. Given their special status, the Kurds were often unwilling to compromise with Arab Sunnis and Shi'ites. They threatened to back out of the political process on various occasions and required special rights.

THE ROLE OF DE-BA'THIFICATION AND DISSOLUTION OF THE IRAQI ARMY

The role that de-Ba'thification and the dissolution of Saddam Hussein's army played in creating the insurgency has been widely debated. The Coalition and the CPA did not react quickly or effectively to the fact that they had deprived Iraq of much of its secular leadership when it removed most Ba'athist officials from office. The end result was to restructure the nature of political power in Iraq along secular and ethnic lines—divided among an emerging Shi'ite majority, with strong religious ties and links to Iran, separatist Kurdish elements, and Sunnis who were being pushed toward taking religious rather than secular nationalist positions. While some "national" political leaders did emerge, the end result was to attempt democracy in a nation with few experienced political leaders, emerging political parties divided largely on sectarian and ethnic lines, and no underpinning experience in enforcing human rights and a rule of law.

The decisions on de-Ba'athification and on dissolution of the Iraqi military also underscored the lack of U.S. planning for Iraqi security and the rule of law. As late as April 2003, U.S. officials were undecided on whether to maintain the Iraqi military. General Abizaid, deputy commander of CENTCOM, "strongly recommended" to the Pentagon in mid-April to keep the Iraqi Army. Internal reviews of secure video-conferences from that time revealed that Abizaid and Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, generally agreed to re-create the Iraqi Army to put an Iraqi face on security.[6]

L. Paul Bremer arrived in Iraq on May 12, 2003, as President Bush's new presidential envoy and head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, effectively replacing Jay Garner. Four days after Bremer arrived in Iraq he issued Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 1: De-ba'thification of Iraq. On paper, de-Ba'thification purged the top four layers of Iraqi leadership, or 1 percent of the former Ba'ath Party.

In effect, however, it eliminated as many as 85,000 members of the Ba'ath Party. This is because implementation of the policy was handed over to Iraqi politicians who had long lists of grievances against the old regime. The head of the de-Ba'athification committee was Ahmed Chalabi, an exile deeply opposed to Saddam who felt little remorse at eliminating large swaths of former government workers. Among those purged were much of the educated class, including teachers, doctors, and scientists.

Bremer later said of the de-Ba'athification policy, "We then turned over the implementation of this carefully focused policy to Iraq's politicians. I was wrong here. The Iraqi leaders, many of them resentful of the old Sunni regime, broadened the decree's

impact far beyond our original design. That led to such unintended consequences as the firing of several thousand teachers for being Ba'ath Party members. We eventually fixed those excesses, but I should have made implementation the job of a judicial body, not a political one."[7] Ultimately, 9,000 would seek permits that allowed them to return to work. The policy, however, alienated much of the Sunni community and contributed to the growth of the insurgency by the summer of 2003.[8]

It was clear, however, that any new Iraqi force would need to deal with several critical qualitative problems in Saddam's army, as well as its uncertain loyalty to any new regime and shift in power among Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and other minorities. Many Sunni Iraqis spoke about the competence of Iraqi forces and how well they would have performed if they had been preserved and recalled. Anyone who watched Iraqi forces operate during the Iran-Iraq War, however, became aware of the deep ethnic and sectarian divisions in Iraqi forces and that the regime often punished competence and professionalism rather than rewarding it.

The uprisings and political tensions in Iraq following the Gulf War triggered a continuing series of purges in the Iraqi military that lasted until Saddam's fall, while a vast number of promotions inflated the ranks of senior officers and filled slots with loyalists and incompetents. The security services grew in size and ruthlessness, the regular police were kept largely a passive tool of the regime, and promotion of all the military, security, and police forces increasingly became a matter of loyalty. Regular military forces became tied down in garrison duty along the Iranian border and opposite the Kurdish security zone in the north and declined sharply in capability. Units like the Republican Guard and security forces were used in attacking the Kurds and in an enduring low-level civil struggle with the Shi'ite resistance in the south.

The "culture" of the Iraqi military was also a key problem. Junior officers were trained **not** to show initiative, and others failed to actively support their men or "lead forward." Aggressive and active mid-rank officers were seen as a threat by their superiors. Noncommissioned officers had little status or training and were not the key partners of their officers. Conscripts were given minimal training and support and subjected to harsh conditions.

The active army of 1980–1988 had become a politicized, barracks-oriented force by 2003, manned largely by conscripts who did not want to serve. Illiteracy, poor physical conditions, and appointment by nepotism and favoritism were common in both the military and the police. Tests and exams were minimal. Men who supposedly had training were often passed or promoted because of influence or to avoid "shaming" a failure. Poor officers stayed on indefinitely.

The police were even more of a problem. As one senior U.S. expert, speaking on background, put it, "The police ranked 11th out of Iraq's 11 security services, and had minimal pay, training, and equipment. They feared any form of interference with government activity, and were largely passive and station-bound. Investigations and prosecutions had to be paid for by complaints coming to the station, and follow-up investigations and prosecutions could become corrupt bidding contests between opposing sides, followed by feuds and revenge." Corruption, favoritism, and nepotism were endemic. The lack of a retirement system also meant many older police

stayed on indefinitely and "phantoms" stayed on police lists after their deaths to pay their widows.

There were still some outstanding Iraqi leaders and force elements in each service, but the vast majority were poorly trained, lacked effective leadership and organization, and were designed more to protect the regime—at the cost of corruption, self-interest, and inertia—and not the nation. The services were vastly overstaffed by senior officers who were used to getting privileges, but not to leading and taking initiative.

The end result was that far too many of the military, security, and police personnel who served under Saddam lacked the training, leadership, and motivation to act as the kind of military, security, and police forces Iraq needed in the post-Saddam era. Deputy Secretary of State Richard L. Armitage, speaking on this issue, commented, "[T]he units that existed—previous to the invasion are not ones that were trained in the type of skills that we necessarily prize, to include a respect for the lives of civilians and civilian property."[9]

These were the realities that the Coalition faced. Moreover, the vast majority of police and army bases had been looted in the months following the U.S. invasion to the point that they were not usable, and virtually all conscripts had voted with their feet.

Nonetheless, the decision to formally disband the military and the failure to make a real effort to build a new force in the near future had serious effects for years to come. Bremer ordered Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2 on May 23, 2003, which officially eliminated Iraq's security apparatus. In his short interim in Iraq, Jay Garner had supported reestablising the Iraq Army and said that he had the support of General Abizaid and General Franks at CENTCOM. The CPA Web site still stated on May 15, 2003, that the goal was to bring back the 30,000 Iraqi Army members that had registered for emergency payments. The dissolution of the Iraqi military eliminated the Iraqi Army, the Interior Ministry, and other smaller units.[10]

By the end of May and early June 2003, former Iraqi government workers and military members began demonstrating in large numbers, and some U.S. troops on the ground felt that the failure to recognize this newly unemployed Sunni group played a significant role in the escalation of the insurgency. One former officer and protester told Al Jazeera at the time, "The only thing left for me is to blow myself up in the face of tyrants." One of the largest protests occurred on June 18 and included some 2,000 former Iraqi military members threatening to take up arms against the Coalition.

CPA Order Number 2 also included a provision that disqualified former officers above the rank of colonel from receiving their pensions. However, payments for lower-grade officers were also delayed, and the protests grew more violent. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld authorized these payments in early July and most of the protests stopped, but hundreds of thousands of former military and government workers remained unemployed and alienated by the Coalition "occupation"—a sharp contrast from their former positions at the top of Iraqi society.[11]

In the end, the archaic de-Ba'athification law and the dissolution of the military—and the failure to make a real effort to build a new one until 2004—were only two factors that led to the insurgency and civil war, and the violent repercussions of both could have been prevented with better prewar planning. These decisions, however, clearly played a role in providing support for the Sunni-led insurgency.

THE EMERGENCE OF SUNNI INSURGENTS

The first signs of violence and unrest that would lead to the insurgency and civil conflicts in Iraq began as U.S. forces captured Baghdad in April 2003. The Coalition did not have enough troops to secure Baghdad after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and mass looting and common crime erupted. The vast majority of wealthy areas and former government ministries in Baghdad and the surrounding urban belt were looted. Crimes such as murder, kidnappings, and rape were also widespread.

At the beginning of the insurgency, the Coalition downplayed the overall scale of violence during Saddam's fall and focused almost exclusively on the past regime as a threat with little popular support. Coalition forces tended to refer to Iraq's more mainstream insurgents as "former regime loyalists" (FRLs), or "former regime elements." As the insurgency evolved, so did the terminology used to describe it, and these terms fell out of favor with analysts as time progressed.

This U.S. focus on FRLs ignored the true nature of the insurgency. The United States was already dealing with a Sunni population that largely opposed the invasion and increasingly reacted with a mixture of Iraqi nationalism, Sunni resentment and anger, and popular opposition to any form of Western occupation. This domestic anger was fueled by a slowly growing number of foreign and Iraqi neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremists and the actions of both Shi'te and Kurdish leaders and the CPA.

The insurgency gained broad support and was not a small group of "bitter enders." Ali A. Allawi, former Iraqi Minister of Defense and Finance Minister, described the insurgents as being held together by three factors: "family loyalties, tribal affiliations or a commitment to an extreme form of Islamism—and frequently all three—which made these groups difficult to penetrate."[12]

Maintaining Sunni power and prestige was a major issue to virtually all Iraqi Sunnis. While most of Iraq's ruling elite during Saddam Hussein's decades of dictatorship were Sunni, the top elite came from a small portion of Sunnis, many with family backgrounds in what were originally rural military families. The top elite had strong ties not only to Saddam's extended family, but to Tikritis in general, and the al-Bu Nasir tribe and its Bejat clan and Majid family.[13] However, the vast majority of Sunnis got little special benefit from Saddam's rule, and many Sunnis suffered from his oppression in the same way as other Iraqis.

Insurgent Planning Before, During, and Immediately After the War

Saddam's regime laid the groundwork for the Sunni insurgency that followed, although it had failed to take effective action to create "nationalist" groups before,

during, or immediately after the war. The bulk of the unclassified evidence about the government's prewar efforts indicated that any such planning was largely ineffective, except for the creation of large weapons caches designed to support the largely nonexistent Popular Army and service operations by the Fedayeen. These efforts may have eased the rise of the insurgency after the war, but the remnants of Saddam's regime were slow to organize, many leaders were quickly captured, and many of those who joined the insurgency were more pro-Sunni and/or pro-Ba'ath than pro-Saddam.

The Ba'ath Party did not dissolve when the CPA formally abolished it in May 2003. It reorganized with a new structure, established a new politburo in 2004, and at least some elements operated from a *de facto* sanctuary in Syria.[14] At the same time, it soon became apparent that many full-time and part-time Iraqi groups associated with the Ba'ath were linked more by tribe, family, and locality than any sense of Ba'ath political identity.

The regime's loyalists had months to reorganize in which they did not face well-organized Coalition security forces or a well-planned and effective nation-building effort. They were able to take advantage of the large-scale release of criminals, an initial failure to provide ex-military members with any financial security, broad Arab and Islamic resentment or anger with the United States over a host of issues, Iraqi nationalism, Sunni fears of losing power and wealth, outside volunteers, and young men desperate for money.

The Crisis Group conducted interviews with Ba'athists and officers of the former security apparatus (including Special Security) in Baghdad, Tikrit, Bayji, and Mosul and found the following:[15]

> There is no evidence that Saddam designed a guerrilla strategy in anticipation of military defeat. Indeed, the period immediately following the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime was remarkably calm; US forces, in effect, suddenly found themselves without an enemy . . . The fallen regime's power structures collapsed almost instantaneously, laying bare the extent to which Saddam Hussein's authority—including over his own security apparatus—relied on coercion rather than loyalty. Senior Baath party members as well as army and intelligence officers initially were at a loss, facing both an uncertain future and a population that, in its vast majority, appeared willing to give the United States a chance. Far from preparing a collective comeback, these so-called Saddamists above all were preoccupied with personal survival.
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> . . . Elements of the former regime, some Shi'ites included . . . soon helped set up small cells of fighters. But this was not planned ahead of time and reflected neither a desire to restore the past nor ideological attachment to Baathism; rather, these cells developed gradually, initially drawing individuals angered by dim prospects, resentful of the occupation and its indignities, and building on pre-existing party, professional, tribal, familial or geographic—including neighbourhood—networks.
>
> . . . Former regime officials were, of course, ideal candidates and soon became the vanguard of the armed opposition, combining as they did idleness, relevant military and intelligence skills as well as knowledge of the whereabouts of vast weapons stockpiles and relatively scarcer cash reserves concealed by the regime in anticipation of the

projected defense of Baghdad . . . Former hierarchical structures in the Baath party or the army helped structure what initially were amorphous cells . . . But for the most part this had little to do with Ba'athist loyalty; from the outset, the armed opposition's discourse build on patriotic and religious themes at the expense of a largely discredited ideology.

Even at an early stage, when foreign fighters in all likelihood played a negligible part in day-to-day operations, the upsurge in attacks during the month of Ramadan in 2003 (27 October–25 November) illustrates the extent to which the struggle was framed as a religious duty . . . A handful of groups claimed to be acting on behalf of the Baath, but they quickly were put on the defensive, having to account for the former regime's perversion of Baathism . . . its crimes . . . and the 2003 debacle . . . While some fighters probably still looked upon Saddam Hussein as a symbol of anti-imperialist resistance . . . virtually all armed groups dissociated themselves from the former president . . . and some openly denounced him.

. . . Nor is there persuasive backing for the view that the current battle is but the extension of a global *jihadist* war. Most analysts now concur that the Ba'athist regime did not entertain relations with al-Qa'ida and foreign volunteers invited by Saddam to die in his defense had nothing to do with Osama bin Laden's organization.

. . . The impact of foreign *jihadists* grew over time, but during the early stages of the insurgency it appears to have been negligible and al-Qa'ida in particular remained absent, claiming none of the spectacular attacks orchestrated in 2003.

. . . In short, resort to static explanations of the insurgency tends both to misjudge what in fact has been a dynamic, evolving phenomenon and, importantly, to downplay the role played in its emergence and subsequent development by specific US policies and practices.

Such reports may, however, understate the level of organization involved. Some US intelligence experts said on background before the invasion that Saddam's regime and intelligence and security services were organizing for a post invasion resistance. The broad dispersal of weapons and arms in much of Iraq may have been designed to support such activities, and a relatively sophisticated operation did develop by mid to late-2003 that included individuals with ties to senior Ba'athists who were operating in Syria as well as Iraq. In *Cradle of Conflict*, Michael Knights provides a detailed account of this scenario. He describes a well organized, and calculated campaign led by the Ba'athist regime to build an effective resistance force, both during and after the war.[16]

According to Iraq Study Group interviews, the plan was known within the top echelon as "the Challenge Project" and involved the creation of a two-stage guerrilla campaign: the first would take place in tandem with the conventional defense of Baghdad and the second was intended to take effect after the fall of Iraq's capital. The plans sought to inflict attritional losses on the US military to deter it from advancing all the way to Baghdad or to shorten the period of the postwar occupation. . . .

The first phase, executed before and during Operation Iraqi Freedom, involved setting the conditions for prolonged guerrilla warfare. The regime's longstanding fear of ammunition shortages during wartime led to the establishment of ammunition supply points (ASP) throughout Iraq . . . An estimated 650,000 to 1 million tons of weapons and explosives were distributed throughout the country in a deliberate attempt to sustain local resistance during and after the war. In addition to Iraq's well-known arms depots—some of which covered more than a hundred square kilometers—more than ten thousand forward ASPs were created in schools, hospitals, mosques, fields, and warehouses

. . . .The ISG calculated the average size of Iraqi arms dumps to be forty tons, although the presence of some superdepots indicate that statistically the vast majority of arms were small stores consisting of less than a ton of small arms, RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades], artillery shells, and land mines. . .

The sudden cessation of regime communications and citywide disappearance of the Ba'athist leadership in Baghdad on April 10 signaled the activation of the postwar phase of this resistance effort. . .Just as Iraqi air-defense gunners were offered rewards to shoot down US aircrafts and deliver pilots, Iraqi resisters would be paid to carry out attacks on occupation forces, with bonuses for successful attacks. The release of tens of thousands of criminals in late 2002 created a demographic base from which the resistance effort could draw even if the broader Iraqi populace could not be drawn into the resistance.

The Ba'athist regime had also developed close prewar ties with radical Salafist militants in Iraq and local terrorist groups such as Ansar al-Islam, thereby creating temporary local alliances of mutual convenience in the post-war period. . .

Throughout 2001 and 2002, Mukhabarat officers liaised with terrorists in the Ansar al-Islam enclave in northern Iraq and facilitated the supply of funding, explosives, and vehicles.[17] The Mukhabarat and Ansar al-Islam both brought foreign militants to Iraq, a practice that the Ba'athist regime had carried out since the 1970s. . .After the war, this flow continued, encouraged by Ba'athist elements in Syria and by transnational Salafist groups such as Ansar al-Islam and cells associated with Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The presence of these latter two groups ensures that even if the Ba'athist cause failed, Iraq would have a prolonged violent struggle.

U.S. analysts were slow to acknowledge that Ba'athist and ex-regime loyalists represented only a declining part of a Sunni insurgency that was increasingly dominated by religious movements and was driven by other causes. It was not until 2004 that Central Intelligence Agency reports reflected the fact that Sunni loss of power, prestige, and economic influence was a key motivating factor, as was unemployment and a loss of personal status—direct and disguised unemployment among young Sunni men was 40–60 percent in many areas after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Many insurgents were motivated by tribal or family grievances, nationalism, and religious duty. Others were motivated by the U.S. occupation—particularly those who lost a loved one fighting U.S. forces—and the political and economic turmoil that accompanied the occupation.[18]

The Rise of More Extremist Insurgents

As discussed in the previous chapter, there was a significant distinction between the FRL insurgents and the more neo-Salafi extremists. Islamist elements began to play a growing role in Iraq in the summer of 2003. They were a mix of Iraqis and foreigners, and, unlike the FRLs, saw Iraq as one piece of a broader struggle against the West. By 2005, there were some 40–50 extremist groups working in Iraq, but most operated independently in the first three years of the war. In early 2006, some would join together in an umbrella group called the Mujahedeen Shura Council.

Neo-Salafi insurgents immediately used far more extreme forms of violence. They introduced car bombs [vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDS)], which were an offshoot of the FRLs' improvised explosive devices (IEDs). It later emerged that the majority of these car bombs had been rigged by Abu Umar al-Kurdi. He was associated with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the rising neo-Salafi insurgent threat. He was captured in 2005 and admitted to the high-profile car bombs targeting the Jordanian Embassy and UN headquarters in the summer of 2003. Al-Kurdi offered his services to the wide range of insurgent groups operating in Iraq.[19] The extremists also popularized the use of suicide bombings, which caused widespread casualties and were a useful intimidation device.

One of the first extremist groups founded in Iraq was the Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS). Immediately after the fall of Baghdad the group took over the *Umm-al-Maarik* (Mother of all Battles) Sunni mosque in Baghdad and renamed it *Umm-al-Qura* (Mother of all Cities) mosque. The mosque became a recruiting site and propaganda center for AMS and the early Islamist insurgents. AMS did not openly support sectarian violence initially, and it coordinated with Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army in attacks against the Coalition. It did, however, oppose the Shi'ite-dominated political process.[20]

Another group, Kurdistan-based Ansar al-Sunna, had suffered a U.S. attack on its base and did not regroup until the fall of 2003. The group coordinated with FRLs and later joined forces with al-Zarqawi and al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia. The U.S. Department of State *Country Reports on Terrorism* for 2004 provided the following more detailed description of the role of Ansar al-Islam (AI) (a.k.a. Ansar al-Sunnah Partisans of Islam, Helpers of Islam, and Kurdish Taliban):

> Ansar al-Islam (AI) is a radical Islamist group of Iraqi Kurds and Arabs who have vowed to establish an independent Islamic state in Iraq. The group was formed in December 2001. In the fall of 2003, a statement was issued calling all jihadists in Iraq to unite under the name Ansar al-Sunnah (AS). Since that time, it is likely that AI has posted all claims of attack under the name AS. AI is closely allied with al-Qa'ida and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's group, Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (QJBR) in Iraq. Some members of AI trained in al-Qa'ida camps in Afghanistan, and the group provided safe haven to al-Qa'ida fighters before Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Since OIF, AI has become one of the leading groups engaged in anti-Coalition attacks in Iraq and has developed a robust propaganda campaign.
>
> AI continues to conduct attacks against Coalition forces, Iraqi Government officials and security forces, and ethnic Iraqi groups and political parties. AI members have been implicated in assassinations and assassination attempts against Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) officials and Coalition forces, and also work closely with both al-Qa'ida operatives and associates in QJBR. AI has also claimed responsibility for many high profile attacks, including the simultaneous suicide bombings of the PUK and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) party offices in Ibril on February 1, 2004, and the bombing of the US military dining facility in Mosul on December 21, 2004.
>
> Its strength is approximately 500 to 1,000 members, its location and area of operation is primarily central and northern Iraq... The group receives funding, training,

equipment, and combat support from al-Qa'ida, QJBR, and other international jihadist backers throughout the world. AI also has operational and logistic support cells in Europe.[21]

At the end of 2003, al-Zarqawi's influence in Iraq was increasing. He had ties with several different insurgent leaders, such as al-Kurdi. In 2004, the al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia network would take hold and dominate the insurgency and growing civil conflict.[22]

The Islamists were united by similar sectarian beliefs and departures from mainstream Islam, but many also had tribal affiliations in Iraq. The extremists and FRLs did work together to some degree in 2003 and early 2004, but soon they found they had mixed goals and mixed views about how to achieve them. In 2003 the insurgents often used the rhetoric of the more nationalist insurgents, giving them more of an Iraqi appeal and helping them establish a recruiting base in Iraq. FRLs also adopted more religious imagery to appeal to the Islamists.

It was clear from the beginning that the relationship between the two Sunni insurgent groups was tenuous: "Sunni Islamists had frequently been treated harshly by the Saddam regime. But faced with a common enemy and a fear that Iraq was to be handed over to the Shi'a made the Sunni Islamists and fomer Ba'athists allies—at least until the early Ba'athist led insurgency become overshadowed by the Islamists."[23]

Foreign Volunteers and the Role of Syria

The role of foreign volunteers at any part in the insurgency and the civil war is a highly debated issue. The foreign Islamists were more organized and more experienced than the homegrown insurgents. They began flowing into Iraq in the summer of 2003, encouraged by preachers in their home countries to fight in the *jihad*.

What was clear is that Syria played an important role in the rise of the Sunni insurgency. It allowed a wide variety of Iraqi insurgent groups to operate and stage in Syria, with the clear tolerance of Syrian intelligence and security officials. The early existence of insurgent safe houses, small training and indoctrination facilities, and fund-raising activities made it clear that Syria was at best deliberately turning a blind eye, and its border controls were loose and erratic.

Syrian tolerance of virtually all such groups—including Islamist extremist factions—was important even when it consisted of little more than allowing volunteers to be "trained" in Syria for a few weeks. Many insurgents required only the most minimal training. Wearing a suicide vest or driving a suicide vehicle did not take skill, it took motivation. Being able to indoctrinate young men or women intensively in a closed facility was often the key to providing that motivation. Debriefs of infiltrators indicated it worked best if new recruits were secure and did not mix with actual insurgents while they were being indoctrinated.

Iraqi, Jordanian, Saudi, and U.S. officials all repeatedly identified Syria as a serious problem almost immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein. An April

2003 report by Italian investigators described Syria as a "hub" for the relocation of al-Zarqawi's group to Iraq. According to the report, "transcripts of wiretapped conversations among the arrested suspects and others paint a detailed picture of overseers in Syria coordinating the movement of recruits and money between Europe and Iraq."[24]

The United States did gather significant intelligence from the roughly 12,000 men it captured or arrested as of December 1, 2003. Only about 350 out of the 12,000 captured or held and interrogated as of November 1, 2003, were foreign volunteers, many of whom had entered the country before the war. A maximum of 25 were suspected at some point of having serious ties to al-Qa'ida, and only 3 to 5 remained suspects as of December 1, 2003. (The United States had in excess of 5,000 Iraqis and foreign volunteers in custody as of November 27, 2003.)

The majority of these detainees were held at Abu Ghraib prison in western Baghdad. The problem was, however, that some U.S. units were engaging in operations in which they arrested all military-age men in a hostile area. As Thomas E. Ricks notes in *Fiasco,*[25] some units interrogated the detainees first and then sent only a few individuals to Abu Ghraib. Other units, however, tended to send dozens of Iraqi men at one time, overwhelming the capacity of the prison and the military police running it.

However, U.S. officials did tend to overemphasize the importance of foreign volunteers in 2003. Later U.S. and regional intelligence reports found the numbers were relatively small, that most such insurgents were Iraqi, and that they were important largely for their willingness to take on "suicide" missions. Moreover, as Ricks notes in *Fiasco,* foreign fighters tended to use cell phones and other contacts that were more easily traced.[26] Intelligence during this period tended to focus on the movement of these few foreign fighters rather than the native Sunni population that was growing more organized and more disillusioned with the occupation.

THE EVOLUTION OF CRIMINAL GANGS AND MILITIAS

All of these problems were still further complicated by the interaction between the insurgency, sectarian and ethnic tensions, and crime. Criminal gangs first began to appear in the form of unorganized youth militias soon after the end of major combat operations. The majority of the gangs were interested in looting the wealthy areas of Baghdad and the surrounding urban belt. Throughout April and May 2003 the problem of looting intensified and soon came to be a free-for-all of young, armed men. The United States did not anticipate the problem and did not have enough troops in the capital to stop even a portion of the looting. Moreover, U.S. soldiers were instructed to confiscate only those weapons that they came across while on patrol, leaving many of the young men armed.[27]

One of the most devastating acts of looting occurred in mid-April 2003 when these gangs looted the National Museum in Baghdad; "No fewer than 170,000 items had, it was universally reported, been stolen or destroyed, representing a large proportion of Iraq's tangible culture. And it had all happened as some US troops stood by and watched, and others had guarded the oil ministry."[28] While hardly the only

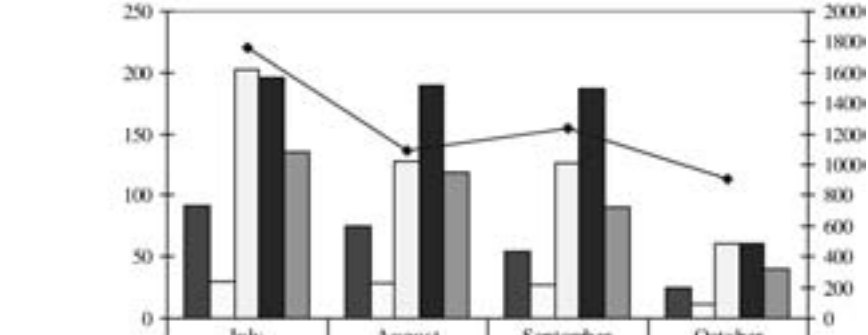
historical site that was looted during this time, the looting of the National Museum underscored the total lack of basic security.

Although these early gangs lacked clear religious ties and did not engage in the more overt acts of sectarian violence that characterized future years of the war, they did lay the foundation for years of lawlessness to come. The failure of the United States to anticipate and then react to the twin growth of crime and militias undermined early efforts to establish security and gain the trust of the Iraqi people. The period immediately after the initial invasion should have been marked by strictly enforced security in preparation for phase IV reconstruction efforts.

Looting was also scarcely the only type of crime being committed in mid-2003. The inability of the United States to keep these early militias off the street and to seize weapons from the hands of young, unemployed men led to huge increases in murders, assaults, kidnappings, burglaries, and carjackings. If one compares the trend for July, August, September, and October, one gets the patterns per type of crime as shown in Figure 3.1.

Much of the crime and looting in the capital and urban areas was unorganized and conducted by civilians, but the lawlessness during this period allowed more organized militias to form, and they often had sectarian undertones. A May 5, 2003, article in the*Miami Herald* described the role of the militias at this time as follows:

> Thousands of gunmen appear each Friday in the slum formerly known as Saddam City, with the blessings of some Shi'ite clerics, ostensibly to protect worshipers. Members, who say they answer to the sheiks at the Hikma mosque, claim they're 5,000 to 6,000 strong



	July	August	September	October
Murder	92	75	54	24
Kidnapping	29	28	27	11
Burglary	202	128	126	60
Carjacking	196	189	187	61
Assault	135	118	90	40
Total	1763	1094	1235	909

Figure 3.1 Crime Incidents from July to October 2003

> and on guard against attacks from any leftover Fedayeen Saddam or other Ba'ath Party loyalists.
>
> "I am taking orders from the mosque. I am a soldier," said Samer Elias, 28, a former Iraqi Army infantryman commanding a checkpoint a few blocks from the mosque.
>
> . . . Kurdish political parties have posted a few armed fighters at their Baghdad offices to inspect all visitors and guard against attack. They're the vanguard of an estimated 30,000 Kurdish forces, roughly 15,000 each in the Kurdish Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, loyal to Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talibani, at times rival warlords for leadership of Kurdish northern Iraq.
>
> . . . But the best-organized, most evident Iraqi militia is the 1,800-strong Free Iraqi Forces who answer to Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress, the Pentagon-backed opposition movement that set up shop at the Iraqi Hunting Club in the desirable Mansour District.[29]

U.S. actions sometimes made this situation even worse. The emergence of Chalabi's Free Iraqi Forces as a criminal militia was underwritten by U.S. planners through much of 2003, and they were allowed to operate largely unhindered. Chalabi's militia was originally sent to Baghdad to stop the looting, but ended up becoming an unregulated militia that was clearly anti-Sunni; "Within days of their arrival, some of Chalabi's forces claimed houses, buildings, document caches and vehicles in Baghdad that belonged to the former regime."[30] These early militias and the lack of U.S. action laid the foundation for the success of future militias, such as Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army that emerged later in 2003.

Moqtada al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army Emerge

Moqtada al-Sadr was written off as a threat for much of the first year of the war. He was seen as too young and lacking a formal theological education. Almost immediately after the end of combat operations, however, Sadr began violently denouncing the U.S. presence. He also denounced the members of the Iraqi Interim Government as puppets in a sermon in Najaf on July 18, 2003.

Al-Sadr controlled a band of some 200 militiamen but lacked broad Shi'ite support, according to U.S. officials in Iraq.[31] He used violence against Shi'ite rivals as early as April 2003, and it was clear that he opposed a prolonged U.S. "occupation." He was accused of having a hand in the murder of rival Shi'ite clerics like the Grand Ayatollah Abd al-Majid al-Khoi on April 10, 2003. There were tentative plans to arrest al-Sadr for this crime during the summer. They were shelved, however, when it became clear that the operation could spark violence with the Shi'ites in central Iraq, where U.S.–allied forces operated.[32] The Sadr movement still lacked a strong following at this time, and most Shi'ites followed the orders of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who worked with Coalition authorities.

In the early fall of 2003 al-Sadr's rhetoric against the Coalition became increasingly violent. He supported attacks against U.S. troops in retaliation for their presence in the Shi'ite stronghold in Baghdad, Sadr City. On October 10, 300 Mahdi militamen attacked members of the 2nd Armored Calvary Regiment, killing two

and wounding several more. There was also evidence that al-Sadr was collaborating with the growing Sunni insurgency.[33]

The Mahdi Army also placed illegal roadblocks and took over mosques in the Shi'ite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Sadr's opposition to the occupation clearly resonated with several hundred young, armed, Shi'ite men. These movements, however, increasingly concerned Ayatollah al-Sistani, who sent members of the Badr Organization—the armed wing of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)—to Karbala to retake the mosques.[34] The fighting between the two militias caused dozens to be killed and many more were wounded. The Iraqi police forces in Karbala and Najaf either walked away or were complicit in the violence. In addition, some 40,000 Shi'ites from Sadr City tried to travel to Karbala to help the Mahdi Army, an indication of the popular support that al-Sadr would acquire in the years to come.[35]

Al-Sadr could no longer control his militiamen in Karbala, and he was forced to ask Ayatollah al-Sistani in secret to disband them. Al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army retreated for the remainder of the year, but these early incidents clearly showed the extent of Shi'ite opposition to a prolonged occupation, the potential for collaboration with Sunni insurgents, and intense Shi'ite rivalries in the south.

The Failure to Address the Militia Issue Early on in the War

The decision to disband the militias was debated for much of the CPA's tenure in Iraq. There was widespread dissension, however, as to how to time and manage the necessary transition and reintegration of the militias. With the exception of al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, the majority of the militias had evolved over the course of several decades in opposition to Saddam Hussein. The largest of these included the Kurdish Peshmerga and SCIRI's Badr Organization. All told, the CPA estimated that the nine active militias in 2003 could claim 60,000–100,000 fighters.[36]

The CPA did develop what could have been an effective plan to disband the more problematic militias. The plan failed largely because it was not given serious priority before the CPA disbanded in June 2004. The CPA did not even take up the issue of integrating militias with the Governing Council until early 2004 and did not take any action until May. This plan would have incorporated the Badr Organization and the Peshmerga into Iraq's new security forces. These groups were highly organized, well trained, attached to well-established political parties, and would have been the easiest to retrain. The Mahdi Army, however, was relatively new, disorganized, and untrained. Moreover, growing internal Shi'ite tensions between the rivaling Mahdi Army and the Badr Organization added another complex dimension to the problem.

Once the CPA gave power to Iraq, the rising Sunni insurgency ensured that none of these militias would willingly disband. Both the Peshmerga and the Badr Organization also were now represented by their political affiliates in the Governing Council and the subsequent interim government and were in a position to hinder any plan to disband the militias.

EARLY IRAQI PUBLIC OPINION

Iraqi and Arab media support for the Sunni insurgency was limited, but there was also little serious support for the United States, and problems relating to Israel and the war on terrorism were having a major impact in mid to late 2003. The U.S. information campaign seemed to remain faltering and ineffective, and reporters on the scene had an almost uniformly negative impression.

Some of the polling after the fall of Saddam was limited and impressionistic. Oxford Research International did release a poll on December 1, 2003, however, based on 3,244 interviews started in mid-October ("around Oct. 15") and completed the first week in November. The results were a harsh warning to the United States. Public confidence was *lowest* in the "US and UK occupation forces," with just 21 percent confident, out of 11 groups or institutions tested. "Political parties" were about the same, 22 percent; and the CPA had 27 percent. Confidence in "Iraq's religious leaders" was highest, at 70 percent, followed by 54 percent for local community leaders, 50 percent for the police, and 48–49 percent for the Governing Council, Iraqi Media Network, and Ministries in Baghdad; the figure for the UN was only 35 percent.

The figures also reflected the lack of any clear support for a new political system. When Iraqis were asked what Iraq "needs at this time," the top choices were "an Iraqi democracy" (cited by 90 percent) *and* "a (single) strong Iraqi leader" (cited by 71 percent). Next was "a government made up mainly of experts and/or managers." A government of experts had 70 percent, the Governing Council had 62 percent, religious leaders had 60 percent, and a group of strong Iraqi leaders had 46 percent, as did a UN transition government. The CPA was second to last on the list, cited by 36 percent. The last was "a government made up mainly of Iraqi military leaders," 26 percent. When Iraqis were asked to think in the longer term—"in 12 months time" and in five years, the answers were virtually the same. "An Iraqi democracy" and then "a (single) strong Iraqi leader" were at the top of the list, and then "a government made up mainly of religious leaders." The CPA and Iraqi military were at the bottom.

Other insights were that 42 percent said the demise of the Saddam regime was "the best thing which happened to you" in the last 12 months—by a large margin the top choice. Some 35 percent said the "war, bombings and defeat" were "the worst thing," again a top choice by a large margin. Some 67 percent said that "regaining public security in the country" was a top priority. The lack of adequate U.S. reporting and polling early on in the war contributed to the unrealistic assessments that were being made in 2003 and 2004.

EARLY INSURGENT STRATEGY AND TACTICS

The rise of civil disorder was only part of the problem. Attacks against U.S. troops became more organized and more violent through the spring and summer of 2003. The looting more or less stopped by June, but the Coalition now faced an alienated

Sunni population that offered growing support to Saddam's loyalists. It was clear by the summer that there now were organized cells of true former regime loyalists directing and funding the effort. There seemed to be a rough chain of command in the sense that there was some hierarchy or pyramidal structure, with true "FRL" cells at the top, regional cells below, and then large numbers of part- or full-time attackers.

The insurgency also benefited from the availability of arms and explosives. Saddam Hussein had distributed arms caches throughout the country well before the U.S. invasion. The United States and the Coalition lacked sufficient forces to secure these sites, and Iraq's armed forces guarding these sites disbanded or were dissolved by the CPA.

The insurgency had ready financing, most of which appeared to flow from Syria or was confiscated by Saddam's loyalists before the invasion. And perhaps more importantly, the insurgency had the "implicit support that was given them by broad swaths of opinion in the Sunni Arab community, which made the recruitment of spies and infiltrators into their ranks an even more difficult task," according to former Defense Minister Ali Allawi.[37] Moreover, the insurgents' tactics were largely low-tech and the recruits, at least initially, were volunteers.

With available arms, financing, recruits, and targets, the insurgency adopted the following strategy in 2003, many elements of which were adopted by Sunni Islamist groups once the Saddamists were captured or killed and the insurgency gathered broader Sunni support:

- Organize highly dispersed elements in a cell-like structure, often using men to conduct actual attacks who have little or no understanding of the command and financing structure above them. Intimidate or kill Iraqis providing human intelligence where possible, enhance security shelter in areas supporting the FRLs, move constantly, and use false names and deception to complicate the human intelligence task.
- Focus attacks on high-profile targets likely to get extensive media attention and to influence and intimidate Iraqis, while creating the impression of a far more successful level of attack than actually exists.
- Maintain a constant stream of U.S. casualties in an effort to have a political impact in the United States. Attack or kill Iraqis and personnel in Coalition forces, international organizations and contractors, and allied officials. Seek to persuade Iraqis not to support the Coalition and persuade international organizations, contractors, and allied groups to leave.
- Steadily escalate the military threat. Create elements close to company-sized irregular combat units to try to challenge U.S. raids and attack convoys and vulnerable targets.
- Reduce the exposure of FRL personnel by using longer-range weapons like mortars, surface-to-air missiles, and rockets and by using vehicle bombs and IEDs.
- Attack the U.S. and Coalition aid and nation-building effort and do so at the points most likely to have a political impact and deprive the United States of the ability to win hearts and minds.
- Broaden the area of attack as much as possible to make the FRL attacks seem broader based, force the United States to disperse its forces throughout Iraq, deprive Iraqis

supporting the nation-building effort of any sanctuary, and undermine allied and international support for the United States.

- Intimidate or kill the Iraqi police and security forces supporting the Coalition. Isolate them as much as possible, and try to provide incidents that will cause backlash against them or the United States.
- Support the military effort with a military civil action program including extensive local contacts with Iraqi officials and direct aid in the form of the U.S. military-operated Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP).
- Exploit U.S. and Coalition attacks—including attacks using aircraft, helicopters, and artillery to counter hostile Iraqi rocket and mortar attacks and to claim the use of excessive force. Exploit any civilian casualties and collateral damage as a propaganda weapon. Encourage protests and individuals to claim innocence and collateral damage in front of the media—even when no damage exists. Circulate conspiracy theories and make false claims about each U.S. attack.
- Provoke or exploit intervention by Syria, while trying to increase tensions with Iran and Turkey, and seek support from volunteers and outside terrorist and extremist groups, often claiming an Islamic character to FRL efforts that does not really exist.
- Prevent the Coalition from winning "hearts and minds" by attacking and sabotaging the efforts to create a new Iraqi government, by killing supporters and officials, by exploiting ethnic tension or conflict, and by discrediting the effort with propaganda and conspiracy theories.
- Exploit growing Sunni fear and resentment of having a minority role in Iraq, while claiming a nationalist and Islamic character to try to win Shi'ite support.
- Kill or intimidate Shi'ite, Kurdish, and Sunni leaders and figures that support the nation-building effort or U.S.–led occupation, knowing that Shi'ites are the emerging majority (60 percent+), while retaining Kurdish support and seeking to minimize the alienation of the Sunnis and their fears of the loss of power, influence, and wealth. At the same time, emphasize Iraq's secular political development.
- Use direct attacks on facilities, the killing of aid workers and contractors, sabotage, and focused criminal activity to make aid and economic modernization reform efforts as ineffective as possible, and prevent the United States and a new Iraqi government from exploiting Iraq's oil wealth. Seek to blame the United States and the Coalition for the resulting hardships and to make the outside aid program unpopular and too expensive to sustain. Try to use conspiracy theories about the allocation of aid, and problems in the effort, justify charges of exploitation and neoimperialism, and trigger confessional and ethnic conflict.
- Attack UN workers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), foreign embassies, foreign contractors, and other targets to deprive the United States of international support, and force UN, NGO, and allied efforts out of the country. Make sure that much of the aid process does not function and that the U.S.–led effort will not be replaced or supplemented by an international effort that could also deprive the FRLs of any chance at power.
- Use an information strategy that avoids tying the opposition too closely or openly to Saddam, while taking steps to convince Iraqis that Saddam and other key leaders are still alive and active. Portray the FRL effort as Iraqi nationalist, Arab nationalist, and

Islamic in character. Capitalize on Iraqi and Arab tensions with the United States over the Arab-Israeli conflict and its rhetoric and actions in the war on terrorism. Use Arab and Islamic media to portray the attacks on the United States as pro-Arab and pro-Islam. Advocate anti–U.S and Coalition conspiracy theories.

These strategies evolved with time as the Iraqis hostile to the Coalition and the Iraqi government learned from experience and reacted to U.S. raids and counter-strikes. It was clear from the start, however, the fighting involved the following tactics to implement this mix of strategies:

- Seeking to provoke the United States into security actions that would make Iraqis angry and hostile and to drive ordinary Iraqis into confrontations with U.S. troops that caused armed clashes, that got broad media coverage, and that led to revenge killings or attacks.
- Exploiting a critical mistake made by the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs and carried on by the CPA by creating U.S. security zones around U.S. headquarters in central Baghdad. This created a no-go zone for Iraqis and allowed the attackers to push the United States into a fortress that tended to separate U.S. personnel from the Iraqis. This followed a broader pattern where terrorists knew that attacks tended to push the United States into locating in "force protection" enclaves and cut Americans off from the local population.
- Making steadily more sophisticated use of improvised explosive devices to conduct remote attacks on U.S. forces, nation builders, and friendly Iraqis in ways that allowed the attackers to avoid being killed by U.S. troops.
- Conducting better planned and more sophisticated urban and road movement ambushes with RPGs to create a constant low-level threat and separate the U.S. forces and nation builders from the Iraqis.
- Using sabotage and theft to try to cripple the nation-building effort, particularly in terms of utilities, schools, urban government centers, water, and petroleum facilities. (Figure 3.2 shows Iraq's pipelines.)
- Killing and intimidation of Iraqis actively willing to cooperate with the United States and its allies and of "informers."
- Exploiting Islam, Iraqi nationalism, and Arab identity as political and propaganda weapons. At least tacitly trying to make the Shi'ite-Sunni dominated Council and supporters of the United States seem like "appeasers" or "traitors."
- Circulating conspiracy theories—like claims U.S. troops wear "X-ray sunglasses" to discredit the United States and increase hostility toward the United States.
- Manipulating religious symbols like mosques to try to provide U.S. attacks or confrontations that can be called anti-Islamic. Manipulating pro-Islamic groups to gain their support for Ba'ath/pro-Saddam action against the United States.
- Using youth gangs and other groups to destroy U.S. civic action programs like creating soccer fields, fixing schools, etc., at night.
- Broadening attacks to hit at non-U.S. targets like NGO personnel, the Jordanian Embassy, etc. This forced the United States to broaden its security coverage, which

Figure 3.2 Iraqi Oil Fields and Pipelines

tended to exclude civilians and NGOs from nation-building activity in threatened areas and impacted heavily on the political activity of Arab and foreign nations.

- Attacking or provoking attacks in urban areas where a U.S. response was likely to lead to clashes or confrontations that provoked, wounded, or killed Iraqi civilians.
- Carrying out attacks on U.S. and allied targets that killed Iraqi civilians, believing the United States would often get the blame for a lack of protection.

- Using large stockpiles of explosives, arms, and bomb-making materials dispersed before the war to create a diverse pattern of attacks that became more effective as the attackers gained experience.
- Smuggling oil or otherwise becoming involved in theft and looting to gain revenue.
- Paying or inciting young men not directly tied to the Ba'ath or Saddam's security and paramilitary groups to carry out attacks so that key cadres were not put at risk.
- Exploiting media coverage wherever possible by sending tapes to Arab broadcast media, inciting or leading groups of young men to demonstrate against the United States, locating attacks in crowded or urban areas where civilian casualties were likely to be caused as U.S. troops react.
- Planting agitators to manipulate crowds in front of the media or provide a reaction/sound bite in English or a foreign language.
- Using media coverage of the attacks as a means of coordinating follow-on attacks and knowing what methods are proving successful and having the most media impact.

EARLY PATTERNS OF ATTACK

The pattern of attacks and casualties that resulted from these forces shaped the rise of the Sunni insurgency, although the data on the relative frequency, intensity, and importance of given tactics are often uncertain. There was a reasonable amount of summary reporting and a flood of reporting on daily incidents. However, U.S. and British official reporting was erratic and left many gaps that make it difficult to analyze intensity and cycles in the violence and characterize trends.

For example, the attack and casualty counts issued by the Coalition and the United States generally focused on attacks directed at U.S., allied, and Iraqi government targets rather than all attacks and did not include most attempts and minor incidents. One of the many tragedies of Iraq was that the Coalition's effort to "spin" reporting on the war in favorable directions made the Department of Defense and the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) slow to count Iraqi civilian and insurgent casualties, report on Iraqi military and police casualties in ways that treated them as partners whose sacrifices deserved recognition, and match its analysis of the impact of the insurgency with equal reporting on sectarian and ethnic violence. They generally did not include Iraqi criminal activity or sabotage, although some was clearly insurgent driven. Like most partial counts, this disguises another important shift in the patterns in insurgency.

The United States provided official reporting on the expansion of FRL operations, but the area of FRL operations had expanded along the eastern bank of the Tigris River from Samarra to the town of Kazimiyah, south of the refinery town of Baiji. There was some FRL presence in the area from Kazimiyah to the southern approaches of Baiji and Kirkuk, where Iraq's northern oil fields, pipelines, and production facilities make tempting targets.

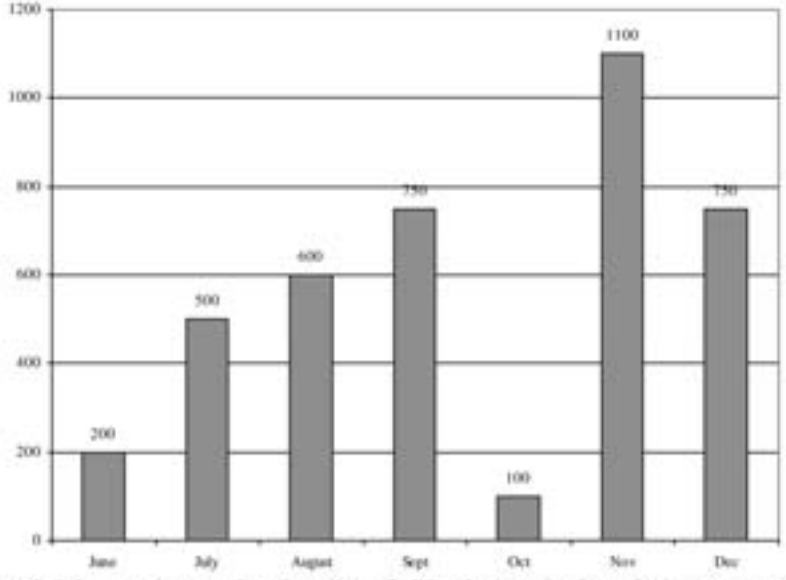
They also expanded into the area to the north from Jalawla toward Kifri and the Turkmen city of Tuzkhurmatu, in the area up to Tawuq and up to the eastern

approaches to Kirkuk, and between the southern entrance to Tuzkhurmatu and Kirkuk. This expansion, however, was as much the result of improved U.S. raids and operations as anything else.

These problems were further compounded by the fact there were few meaningful Iraqi government data. Iraqi Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior had stopped issuing meaningful reporting on the number and intensity of attacks in the summer of 2004.

These tactics, however, were employed for the duration of the U.S. presence in Iraq. The insurgents reacted to U.S. force flow and did suffer several tactical setbacks, but they largely continued to attack U.S. and Coalition targets as long as they were on the ground. They also continued to attack key infrastructure and reconstruction projects, such as oil pipelines and electricity. In 2007, Baghdad would be operating with almost the same amount of electricity as it had in the summer of 2003 due to these attacks. The insurgents reacted to U.S. technological advances while keeping their own tactics low-tech. There were few, if any, U.S. soldiers serving second and third tours in Iraq who would say that the enemy had not adapted well and remained formidable.

Figure 3.3 shows the average number of attacks from June through the end of 2003. Much of the initial violence during May and June 2003 was centered on



Note: Includes approximate number of attacks on Coalition, Iraqi security forces, Iraqi government officials, civilians, and infrastructure.

Source: Adapted from the DIA and MNF-I data presented in Joseph A. Christoff, "Rebuilding Iraq: Preliminary Observations on Challenges in Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Military and Police," Government Accountability Office (GAO) GAO-05-431T, March 14, 2005, p. 10.

Figure 3.3 Approximate Number of Major Attacks per Month: June–End 2003

Fallujah and Baghdad, in the area known as the "Sunni triangle." Attacks against mosques and oil facilities were targets from the start. So was the targeting of local Iraqi officials and recruits. In general, however, the insurgents concentrated on Coalition targets, NGOs, and foreign diplomats.

A chronology of some early incidents illustrates both how the insurgency emerged and the types of attacks insurgents carried out in the initial months following the fall of Saddam's regime:

- May 1, 2003: President George W. Bush declares an end to major combat operations in Iraq. Seven U.S. soldiers are wounded in a grenade attack upon an American base in Fallujah, a stronghold for Saddam Hussein loyalists. Earlier, U.S. troops kill 15 civilians at a protest in the city.
- May 27, 2003: Two U.S. soldiers die in an organized attack on an Army checkpoint in Fallujah.
- June 12, 2003: The first attack on a pipeline occurs in northern Iraq, which supplies crude oil to Turkey. Figure 3.2 shows Iraq's major pipelines and oil fields.
- June 30, 2003: Three blasts rock Fallujah. One, at the Al-Hassan mosque, kills a Muslim cleric and six theology students and injures 15 others. U.S. Central Command reports that "something like an ammunition dump" exploded near the mosque.
- July 1, 2003: An explosion destroys a Sunni mosque in Fallujah, killing at least ten Iraqis, including the chief cleric, and injuring four others. Many Iraqis blame an American missile for the destruction and chant, "America is the enemy of God."
- July 5, 2003: An explosion at a police-training center in Ramadi kills seven Iraqi police recruits and wounds 40.
- July 16, 2003: Attacks in western Iraq claim the lives of a pro–U.S. mayor and his son.
- August 7, 2003: A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens.
- August 15, 2003: Saboteurs blow up a crude oil export pipeline in northern Iraq, igniting a fire and disrupting oil exports to Turkey.
- August 19, 2003: A truck bomb explodes outside UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing 24 people, including the head of the UN mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello. More than 100 are injured. The dead also include the Iraqi coordinator for the UN children's fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers.
- August 29, 2003: An explosion at a Najaf mosque kills 95, including one of Iraq's most prominent Shi'ite leaders, Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim of SCIRI. Another 125 are wounded.
- Oct. 27, 2003: Four suicide bombings target International Red Cross headquarters and four Iraqi police stations in Baghdad, killing 40 people, mostly Iraqis.

The Rise of Improvised Explosive Devices, Vehicle-Borne IEDs, and Suicide Bombings

As this chronology shows, most of the attacks were caused by suicide bombings or IEDs, both of which would remain the insurgency's primary weapons in the years to

come. IEDs were responsible for about one-third of U.S. military deaths in 2003. By 2007, IEDs had accounted for roughly 65 percent of all U.S. casualties. These bombs were deadliest for the large number of convoys traveling along supply routes throughout the country.

Roadside bombs evolved throughout the war as the United States developed better defensive measures. In the summer of 2003, most IEDs were hardwired, but by the winter about half were remotely controlled by anything from cell phones to toy car controllers. IEDs were usually charged with 155-mm artillery shells or mortar rounds. The insurgents also became very apt at hiding the bombs in the growing piles of trash alongside many roads. Military intelligence analysts estimated that insurgent IED cells involved at least six to eight people, including planners, bomb makers, triggermen, and cameramen.[38] By the fall and early winter of 2003, these IEDs had also evolved into car bombs, or VBIEDs.

As time passed, and the insurgents became more organized, the lethality and frequency of attacks increased. There were more attacks on U.S. and Coalition forces, some by members of newly formed militias roaming the streets of Iraq's major cities. As the number of neo-Salafi insurgents, both foreign and Iraqi, increased, the attacks became more deadly and targeted not only the Coalition, but also Iraqis seen to be working with it. Ali A. Allawi describes these tactics in his book, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace:*

> [The Insurgents] quickly discovered who was supportive of or collaborating with the new order. Intimidation could then be quickly employed against these people and those who might follow in their steps, through warning, abductions, death threats, and assassinations. Whenever large numbers of such people had assembled, as in recruitment centres for the police or the military, suicide bombings might be used. The killing sprees targeted all manners of people, from local and provincial officials, teachers, truck drivers carrying supplies to the military or the CPA, canteen workers to day-laborers, cleaners and laundressers. The aim was to force the government to lose control over the streets, and to create a sense of foreboding and perpetual anxiety. The momentum in this direction grew to irresistible levels by the end of 2003, even though the CPA, the Governing Council, and the Cabinet were still ignorant about the scope of the insurgency.[39]

Coalition and Iraqi Casualties

Nevertheless, U.S. and Coalition casualties were still limited. A total of 37 U.S. soldiers were killed in May. The death toll for U.S. troops in June was 30. In July the death toll reached 47, but leveled off in August and September to 35 and 30, respectively. The monthly death toll was still only 43 in October, although it suddenly rose to 82 in November, almost doubling from previous months.

Focused killings of Iraqi officials and recruits, and anti–U.S./Coalition violence, became serious by October and November 2003. U.S. forces faced an average of 15–20 attacks per day during this period. The total number of enemy-initiated attacks rose from 750 in September to 1,000 in October.[40] The level of

sophistication of attacks also increased steadily. The first coordinated suicide bombing occurred in October 2003. The insurgents also conducted a serious mortar attack against CPA housing in the Green Zone. The following month, militants shot down two U.S. helicopters. Together, these incidents signaled the start of a much more serious insurgency. This sharp increase in activity occurred during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, a strategy that the insurgency would follow in years to come. In just two weeks, 60 U.S. soldiers died.

In spite of Coalition hopes, the capture of Saddam Hussein outside Tikrit in early December 2003 did not reduce the level of insurgent violence, but—like the death of Saddam's sons and the killing or capture of other senior Ba'athists—helped create a power vacuum that Sunni Islamists and more fragmented insurgent factions could fill. As Ali A. Allawi explains, "Apart from a few die-hard loyalists, there was little love lost for Saddam Hussein and his family, but the Ba'ath Party continued to serve as a useful mechanism for organizing the resistance to the occupation."[41] The U.S. death toll for December was 40. By January 31, U.S. fatalities from the postcombat period numbered 381, compared to 138 from the combat phase of fighting. Between December and January, insurgents shot down five U.S. military helicopters.

There were few Iraqi casualty reports during this time. The Iraqi Ministry of Health periodically reported casualty figures since mid-2003, but the numbers could not be taken as fact. In late 2003, the ministry announced that 1,764 Iraqis had been killed during the summer months.[42]

The major change in attacks from 2003 to 2004 and later years in the war was the dramatic increase of attacks on Iraqis and pressure toward civil war. Sunni extremist insurgents came to dominate the enemy by 2004, and they saw the Shi'ites, moderate Sunnis, and other ethnic minorities as cooperating with the United States and opposing their extreme form of Islam. The above chronology makes it clear, however, that these attacks on Iraqis and the road to civil war—often in the form of suicide and car bombings—had already begun in 2003, even if they were not recognized by the Coalition.

U.S. AND COALITION STRATEGY AFTER THE END OF MAJOR COMBAT OPERATIONS

The success of the initial invasion was overshadowed by the failure of the Coalition to "hold" areas and provide security for the population. For much of May 2003 U.S. troops in Baghdad lacked clear orders on their mission. The 3rd Infantry Division (ID) was stationed in Baghdad at this time, but did not conduct dismounted patrols or take action against the looters.

The 3rd ID's review of that period states, "3rd ID transitioned into phase IV SASO [Stability and Support Operations] with no plan from higher headquarters. There was no guidance for restoring order in Baghdad, creating an interim government, hiring government and essential services employees, and ensuring that the judicial system was operational," which resulted in "a power/authority vacuum created by our failure to immediately replace key government institutions."[43]

There was also a serious lack of clear leadership on both the civilian and military sides, which was compounded by an unclear chain of command. The CPA had authority for the majority of postwar functions, but was still required to coordinate closely with U.S. commanders in the field. This communication, however, was hampered in part by a tense relationship between Bremer and the top U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. Ricardo Sanchez.[44] This tension extended through the ranks of both institutions, creating confusion and, in too many cases, a lack of oversight.

These problems were still further compounded by an overall denial by the Bush administration that the insurgency was growing and would cause serious problems for U.S. forces. By the summer of 2003, U.S. and Coalition troops faced increasingly organized insurgent attacks in at least 4 of Iraq's 18 provinces.

This mix of problems led the United States and its Coalition allies to pursue the following strategy in the latter half of 2003:

- Restructure U.S. forces to act as low-intensity combat forces making primary use of human intelligence (HUMINT) and Iraqi sources to aggressively seek out and attack hostile forces and to locate and destroy their leaders, financing, and arms.
- Use allied forces to secure the center and southern areas of Iraq, while seeking additional allied force elements.
- Reduce the U.S. role in force protection and security missions as much as possible and minimize the backlash from a U.S. presence in Iraqi towns and cities by replacing the U.S. forces with Iraqi police and security forces. Use Iraqis as a key source of HUMINT.
- Support the military effort with a military civil action program including extensive local contacts with Iraqi officials and direct aid in the form of CERP.
- Reduce vulnerability to hostile Iraqi attacks by using aircraft, helicopters, and artillery to counter hostile Iraqi rocket and mortar attacks.
- Attack Iraqi facilities and hostile groups by air without warning and without the delays inevitable in using ground forces.
- Deter outside intervention by nations like Iran, Syria, and Turkey with diplomatic pressure and threats; extend counterterrorism activity outside Iraq in an effort to limit infiltration and support from outside groups.
- Win Iraqi hearts and minds by creating a new Iraqi government clearly selected by Iraqis and controlled by them through a process that wins broad Iraqi political support and approval without triggering confessional and ethnic tension or conflict.
- Maintain Shi'ite support or tolerance of the U.S.–led occupation, knowing that Shi'ites are the emerging majority, while retaining Kurdish support and seeking to minimize the alienation of the Sunnis and their fears of the loss of power, influence, and wealth. At the same time, emphasize Iraq's secular political development. This, in turn, would help contain a threat that is largely Sunni and confined largely to the Sunni triangle and Sunni areas in Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra with well under 12 percent of Iraq's population.
- Win Iraqi hearts and minds through a $22 billion grant aid program (FY2003 and FY2004) and economic modernization reform efforts that can move Iraq toward a

viable market economy and the ability to exploit its oil wealth, and do so in ways that do not lead to charges of exploitation and imperialism or trigger confessional and ethnic conflict.

- Internationalize the political aid and military efforts as much as possible—without losing the ability to win the war and move the nation-building effort forward—to win international and Iraqi support and reduce the burden on the United States.
- Create an effective information campaign to inform the Iraqis and win their support using TV, radio, print, and direct contact.

The United States had mixed success in all of these strategic efforts, in part because it failed so dismally to effectively prepare for conflict termination, nation building, security missions, and the risk of low-intensity conflict before and during the conventional phase of the Iraq War, and because the Bush administration's ideological view of Iraq and the region was badly decoupled from reality.

The United States did gradually make real progress in restructuring its military effort to fight low-intensity conflict and do so with the HUMINT and civil-military action programs it needed. Britain and other allies did play a critical role, and the effort to train and use Iraqis in security and human intelligence missions had some success.

The U.S.-–led information campaign remained a near disaster; the Iraqi media were filled with conspiracy theories and were often hostile. Television was dominated by hostile Arab satellite TV stations, and many educated Iraqis turned to hostile Western and outside Arab media for news and information.

The U.S. mission remained uncertain at best in 2003. It relied heavily on the ability of the United States and its allies to provide security for the population. The hearts and minds' effort had support from some high level Shi'ite leaders, but foreshadowing the problem it would face in years to come, it had little real support from the population.

INITIAL U.S. EFFORTS TO TRAIN IRAQI FORCES

The rise of the insurgency did lead the United States to take the creation of meaningful Iraqi forces more seriously. The United States made progress in the initial effort to train Iraqi security forces, although serious questions arose about the quality of their training, morale, and loyalties.

The CPA issued Order 22 to create a new Iraqi Army in August 2003 and called for a force of 9 battalions. It quickly became apparent, however, that this force was too small, and Secretary Rumsfeld approved an expansion to up to 9 brigades (27 battalions) and elements of an Air Force and Coastal Defense Force in September 2003.

The officers for this force were being trained and retrained in Jordan, and the plan called for elements of 9 brigades to be established by September 30, 2004, with the Iraqi Civil Defense Force (ICDF) and Iraqi Army to follow. The ICDF had been formed to work in conjunction with Coalition forces, to serve as a liaison between

the Coalition and the local communities, and to provide human intelligence. It was recruited from local communities, trained, and then sent back to that community to work with the Coalition.

A Ministry of Defense was to be established in late March, with a Defense Council and the elements of a Joint Force Headquarters.

The mission statement, or operational requirements, for the Iraqi Armed Forces (IAF) included the following:

- *Border operations:* Army and Air Force role in reconnaissance, surveillance, security, and interdiction missions.
- *Infrastructure and Lines of Communication Security:* Air Force and Army.
- *Military Assistance to Civil Authorities Operations (Army, Navy, and Air Force):* Support to civil authorities in law enforcement and civil action (liaison with local leaders, medical assistance, community engineering projects, and disaster assistance).
- *IAF/ICDC joint operations (Army and Air Force):* Precursor to reserve force integration and creation of a reserve force headquarters.
- *Coalition/Iraqi Armed Forces combined operations (Army, Navy, and Air Force):* Defensive counter air operations' cordon and search operations, maritime intercept operations, and search and rescue.

The short-range force goals for the Iraqi Armed Forces were as follows:

- *Iraqi Army:* 30 battalion equivalents with 27 motorized battalions, 3 engineer battalion equivalents (9 companies), plus 3 division, 9 brigade, and 27 battalion headquarters.
- The division headquarters (HQ) are administrative, not combat units. They will each have 3 brigades (each with 3 motorized battalions and engineer company, an HQ company, and a military police company).
- There will also be substantial military police (MP) and explosive ordnance disposal elements.
- *Iraqi Coastal Defense Force:* 1 battalion and 2 patrol craft.
- *Iraqi Air Components:* 2 C-130s and 6 UH-1s.

The longer-range force goals for the Iraqi Armed Forces were unclear but included the following:

- Improved divisions, which adds a fire-support brigade with an artillery battalion, armored car battalion, and headquarters and headquarters company to each division.
- Improved brigades, which replace the three motorized battalions with 3 light armored battalions, replace the engineer company with an engineer support battalion, and add an MP battalion.

This zero-based approach was in serious trouble for a number of reasons. The U.S. Army failed to issue a proper contract for equipping the Iraqi Army. The equipment

for proper training and equipage was months behind schedule. More generally, the force had no real armor or combat aircraft and lacked status. It simply was not likely to be acceptable to a new Iraqi government.

The services had already been infiltrated by insurgents who provided their fellow combatants with intelligence, while other force elements had a strong Kurdish or Arab Shi'ite character. Few forces had full training, and many did not have anything approaching adequate training. The Facilities Protection Service (FPS) was shown as trained simply because it effectively was a night watchman/security guard service that needed no training. This lack of training of the FPS would leave it open to sectarian tendencies in the coming months. The ICDC was shown as qualified on the grounds it was being continuously trained on the job, but this reflected a major cutback in the original training plan and again put it into the night watchman/security guard service category until it could be given a real training program.

The "quality forces" were the police services and armed forces, but this effort was only just getting started. The CPA and the U.S. military in the field clearly recognized these training problems, but had to rush many men into service because of the insurgency campaign. Some of this lack of training was being compensated for in the field and by cycling key military and police personnel through Jordan and the United States.

As for the New Iraqi Army, it presented even more serious problems. It had only one active battalion (the 1st) at the end of 2003, and some 300 of its 700 men had refused to serve. Some 800 men were in training for the 2nd battalion, and another 800–1,000 had signed up and were scheduled to be in training in January. These forces, however, produced only the equivalent of a light infantry regiment/brigade —even if they fully completed training without further resignations.

The CPA and the U.S. military were also slow to address the equipment needs of the security forces either in terms of assessing what was required or contracting to have it delivered. These equipment shortages continued to plague U.S. training efforts in the years to come.

The U.S. training effort, in its 2003 form, did little to prepare Iraqis for postsovereignty. Not until 2006 would a viable training effort be put in place, at which point attrition, desertion, and localized loyalties would make much of the force strength ineffective.

INITIAL U.S. AID EFFORTS

The failure to effectively prepare for nation building had similar detrimental effects on U.S. aid efforts. The U.S.–led aid effort made limited progress in some areas, but many of these gains were overshadowed by the lack of real security in much of Iraq. Once again, the United States and the Coalition also grossly exaggerated their progress in ways that indicated they were blind to the realities on the ground. Secretary Rumsfeld cited the following key milestones in a press conference on November 26, 2003:

- To date, the Coalition helped in the reopening of all 240 Iraqi hospitals and 95 percent of the country's 1,200 medical clinics;
- By October 6, electric power production reached 4,518 megawatts, surpassing prewar levels;
- Iraq is producing 2.1 million barrels of oil a day for its own use and for world markets;
- Some 400 Iraqi courts are back in operation;
- By October 16, the new Iraqi dinar currency began circulation;
- Some 170 newspapers are being published across the country;
- 5.1 million Iraqi students are back in schools, and 51 million new textbooks have been issued; and
- 97,000 Iraqis applied to attend college for the 2003 fall semester.

The grim reality was that unemployment was still in the 50–60-percent level among young men, and progress was so slow and faltering that much of the impact on hearts and minds had been one of increasing Iraqi frustration. Electric generation, for example, dropped during October from 3,948 megawatts (MW) to 3,582 MW versus an October 1 goal of 4,400 MW. Oil production was averaging 2.0 million barrels per day (mbpd), and exports 1.5 mbpd, but the system was very fragile. The Iraqi consumer also saw a very different picture. Diesel supply was at 53 percent of the CPA goal, kerosene at 56 percent, propane was at 34 percent, and gasoline/benzine was at only 52 percent of its goal—with winter approaching.

Education and health-care numbers were improving, but quality and consumer satisfaction remained major issues. Water output was improving, but only 50 percent of Iraqis had access to potable (safe to drink) water. Landline telecommunications were at 77 percent of the prewar level, and wireless phone service was still not active. Internet access was very limited but nearly 9 percent above the prewar level. Railway service was improving, but 12 of the 20 trains per day were military and were used to carry fuel.

The U.S. military-operated CERP funded many short-term projects, with money going directly to Iraqis for urgent projects in the field. CERP was, indeed, a model of how to win hearts and minds in near real time, by focusing on the most critical tasks with the most political and military impact, providing money only to Iraqis, and then monitoring progress and success on a real-time basis in the field.

The Coalition Provisional Authority, however, wasted much of its aid money on impractical and poorly planned projects. It relied far too much on contractors, tolerated the rise of almost incredible levels of waste and corruption, and failed to effectively plan and manage at any level. The CPA staff in Baghdad was too isolated, and the U.S. contracting procedure was a time-consuming nightmare. Contractor and USAID personnel spent too little time in the field and focused too much on project deadlines and too little on Iraqi short-term needs and perceptions.

The U.S. ability to carry out armed nation building in the face of Iraqi FRL theft, attacks, and sabotage also was uncertain. The critical oil and gas industries were particularly vulnerable. In the future, attacks against key infrastructure would severely

undermine the U.S. reconstruction effort and leave Iraqis without vital services for years to come.

THE NOVEMBER 15 AGREEMENT AND THE DECISION TO END THE CPA

It was clear by the fall of 2003 that the United States lacked popular legitimacy, and many Iraqis saw it as the "occupier". Many Sunnis saw little role for themselves in the future Iraq, and some came to support the growing insurgency. Leading Shi'ites questioned the important status for exiles helping in the Governing Council. The Kurds worried that their "special status" and autonomous zone would be lost.

This lack of popular legitimacy, coupled with a rising violence, led U.S. officials to think that ending the occupation and the CPA might reduce support for the insurgency and create a more stable situation on the ground. This question of transferring sovereignty to Iraq became a heated debate in Washington by October 2003. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld argued that transferring power to the Iraqis would reduce support for the insurgency and help Iraq become a functioning democracy. Ambassador Bremer thought that expediting the transfer would do little to stop the violence. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice worried that a hastily chosen Iraqi interim body would have little more legitimacy than the CPA.[45]

President Bush decided to transfer sovereignty to Iraq before the summer of 2004 on November 12, 2003. The initial failure to include Iraqis in key decisions was now compounded by a plan to rapidly turn power over to a group of Iraqis who lacked political experience, experience in conciliation with various ethnic and sectarian factions, and experience in securing a country.

The CPA and the Governing Council created the "November 15th Agreement" several days later. It set the deadline for transfer of sovereignty on June 30, 2004, but left open questions on the timing of national elections, how to choose the interim government, and the issue of federalism. The agreement, which several leading Shi'ites voted against because it did not guarantee that the interim government would be chosen by a general election, also called for an interim constitution by March 2004.

4

Serious Fighting in the Pre-Transfer of Power Period: January–June 28, 2004

February 1, 2004 One hundred nine people die and 247 are wounded in two suicide attacks during celebrations at the headquarters of two leading Kurdish parties in Irbil.

February 9, 2004 The U.S. military intercepts a document written by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an Islamic extremist from Jordan with ties to al-Qa'ida. The 17-page document details a planned campaign of violence meant to destabilize Iraq by pitting religious and ethnic groups against one another. Expressing frustration with the insurgency's failure to force out American troops, al-Zarqawi asks al-Qa'ida for assistance in accelerating guerrilla activities. Al-Zarqawi is suspected of being involved in a number of recent attacks, including the bombings of UN headquarters, the main gate of the Coalition's headquarters in Baghdad, and a shrine in the holy city of Najaf. Together, the attacks killed nearly 200 people and wounded hundreds more.

February 14, 2004 Roughly 70 insurgents firing rockets, mortars, and machine guns raid police headquarters and the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) in Fallujah in an effort to free foreign prisoners. Fifteen policemen, four insurgents, and at least four civilians die in the attack. The dead guerrillas appear to be Lebanese and Iranian nationals. At least 70 prisoners escape, many—18 by one account—flee with the attackers.

March 2, 2004 In the bloodiest day in Iraq since the end of the war, at least five bombs explode near Shi'ite religious ceremonies in

	Baghdad and Karbala, as hundreds of thousands of pilgrims pack the streets for the Ashura ceremony. At least 270 people die; 573 are wounded. A mourning procession marches to the hospital decrying, "We defy you, America and Israel." It is the first time Shi'ites are permitted to observe the holy day since the Ba'athists took power.
March 8, 2004	The Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) reaches an agreement on an interim constitution, called the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL).
March 31, 2004	Four Blackwater USA security guards are killed in Fallujah, helping to trigger fighting between U.S. forces and insurgents in the Sunni Arab city that lasted through April. These clashes are often called the "First Battle of Fallujah."
April 4, 2004	The followers of Moqtada al-Sadr, a militant Shi'ite cleric espousing fiercely anti-American rhetoric, march through at least six Iraqi cities, seizing control of the area around Kufa and killing nine Coalition troops—seven in Sadr City alone. The violence began when demonstrations supporting al-Sadr and his deputy, who was arrested the previous day, clash with Coalition forces, in Najaf and in Sadr City. Clashes last until June.
May 17, 2004	A suicide bomber kills Izzedin Salim, President of the Iraqi Governing Council, and at least six others at a checkpoint into a Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) headquarters zone. Al-Zarqawi's group, Jama'at al-Tawhid, claims responsibility.: January–June 28, 2004

At the beginning of 2004, it was already clear that the Coalition faced a far more serious threat than a small group of former regime loyalists and that sectarian and ethnic tensions were becoming steadily more serious. The lethality and sophistication of insurgent attacks had increased dramatically, and attacks focused more on ethnic and sectarian targets. Local Iraqi security forces, including police recruits, increasingly were signaled out for attack, and this initially reduced Coalition casualties. U.S. fatalities for the month of February fell to 21, the lowest since May 2003. But March produced the second highest death toll for U.S. troops, 52, since the end of the war.

By early spring 2004, the insurgency had already evolved into a broader struggle. Coalition forces now faced fighting on two fronts: against the growing Sunni insurgency in central Iraq and against the Shi'ite militias in the south. At the same time, Sunni Islamist extremist groups began to play a more active role, both in terms of attacks and in circulating propaganda, tapes, and training aids.

The Shi'ite threat came largely from Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army. In early April, his followers seized control of several cities. Violent clashes between U.S. forces and Shi'ite militias erupted in Kufa, Najaf, and Qut.

At the same time, U.S. forces continued to battle Sunni insurgents in Fallujah and elsewhere in the Sunni triangle. The period between April and June 2004 was marked by frequent battles between U.S. and insurgent forces and had clearly become guerrilla warfare rather than a terrorist campaign.

The number of attacks against Iraqi civilians decreased, as insurgents concentrated their efforts on U.S forces. Because of the growing number of clashes between insurgents and Coalition forces, U.S. fatalities for the month of April increased to 137, more than the previous three months combined. U.S. fatalities for the month of May were 80. The number of attacks against U.S. troops had increased from an average of 200 per week in 2003 to 280 in the last week of March to 370 in the first week of April and 600 in the second week.[1] Some of the intensity of the fighting was defused, however, when al-Sadr endorsed the Iraqi Interim Government and urged his followers to adhere to a previously negotiated cease-fire.

NATION BUILDING, INSURGENCY, AND CIVIL CONFLICT

The political side of nation building in Iraq was becoming steadily more complicated. The risk of confessional struggles between Sunnis and Shi'ites was already obvious, as was the risk of some form of power struggle between Arabs and Kurds. The role of Islam in the state also remained undefined.

Five of the Governing Council's Shi'ites originally refused to sign the Iraqi interim constitution, agreed upon on March 8, 2004, citing their belief that it gave the Kurds the ability to block changes to the constitution. These members feared that the Kurds would thwart all attempts to limit their federal autonomy enshrined in the current version of the constitution. Despite these concerns, the five eventually signed the document, reminding the council of its interim status.

The seeds of tension created during this period did much to make things worse in coming years. For example, the CPA did little to prevent Arab Shi'ites and Kurds from pushing Arab Sunnis out of office. The efforts to create an interim constitution had a strong sectarian and ethnic character and helped lead to over 50 ambiguities in the final constitution decided upon in 2006.

Some forms of political turbulence and low-level violence were inevitable. Iraqis lacked political experience and functioning leadership. No rival leader or political party had been allowed to function since Saddam's bloody purge of his rivals in 1979. Religious leaders had no open political experience for the same reason.

Aside from a few figures like Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, no leader had had broad political visibility or a broad popular base. Even basic governance was precluded by Saddam's insistence on tight control from the top and refusal to delegate functional authority. Saddam's legacy was essentially a political and administrative vacuum, and Iraqis felt their way toward a modern political system under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

Nevertheless, the CPA and Coalition calendar for major milestones in Iraqi nation building advanced in early 2004 was tentative and highly unstable. It would ultimately depend on the Iraqis, particularly on how well they could work together in creating a new government.

The Department of Defense projected the following dates as of early 2004:

2004

March 8	Transitional Administrative Law signed
March 26	CPA will create a new Iraqi Ministry of Defense and a cabinet-level National Security Committee
April 1	Establishment of Election Commission (approximate date)
April 15	Annex to TAL released describing selection process and powers of Iraqi Interim Government (approximate date)
May 30	Selection of Iraqi Interim Government (approximate date)
Phase I (Interim Government)	
June 30	Iraqi Interim Government takes power
	U.S. Embassy replaces CPA; Coalition Provisional Authority will cease to exist
July 30	New Iraqi government becomes fully operational

2005

January 31	Elections for the National Assembly complete: No later than January 31, 2005 (December 31, 2004 if possible)
January 31	At the same time, all Iraqi voters will elect governorate councils—again no later than January 31, 2005
Phase II (Elected Government)	
Early 2005	Iraqi Transitional Government takes power

— Legislative: National Assembly

- 275 elected officials
- Electoral law will aim to achieve at least one-quarter women and fair representation of all communities in Iraq

— Executive: Presidency Council, Council of Ministers, Prime Minister

- President and two Deputies elected by National Assembly
- Presidency Council appoints Prime Minister and Council of Ministers
- Prime Minister responsible for day-to-day government management

— Judicial Authority

- Higher Juridical Council will supervise federal judiciary
- Federal Supreme Court—nine members nominated by Higher Juridical Council and appointed by Presidency Council

August 15	National Assembly completes draft of permanent constitution

October 15	Referendum for constitution—a constitution written by the National Assembly must be presented to the people in a general referendum no later than October 15, 2005
December 15	Elections for permanent government completed—a government elected under the terms of the new constitution, must be held no later than December 15, 2005—this fourth election will bring a directly elected government to power in Iraq
December 31	Permanent government assumes office

Various polls indicated that Iraqis were relatively optimistic about political progress and avoiding civil conflict during this period. At the same time, such polls showed that no secular leader had emerged with great support and that the Governing Council lacked popularity.

The Lack of Coalition and IGC Political Legitimacy

The resistance of April 2004 sharply undercut the already low political legitimacy of the CPA, the U.S. approach to nation building, and the Governing Council. Iraqis and the region perceived the United States as lacking in any credible plan of action and as being "forced" to turn to the UN. Ali A. Allawi, an interim Defense and Finance Minister, says in his own book,[2]

> Not only did the CPA lose face by its turnabout from its original bellicosity but it also left the two antagonists that it faced in a much stronger position. The chaotic planning, personality clashes, the confused lines of authority, and the huge number of uncoordinated actors were all symptomatic of the larger failure of the CPA to establish its credibility as a consistent and purposeful administration. The final few weeks of the CPA's life effectively summarized its essential incoherence.

The "pro-American" Iraqis had been divided and weak and were unable to rally the Iraqi people. The end result was that the U.S. ability to convey popular legitimacy had been sharply undercut precisely at the time the United States needed legitimacy for its June turnover. In addition, U.S. ties to some members of the IGC were becoming steadily more damaging—particularly the image of U.S. ties to "losers" like Ahmed Chalabi.

By this point, Iraq had become a natural battleground for Islamic insurgents and "volunteers" of all persuasions. There was no meaningful evidence that Iraq was a focus of terrorism before the war or a primary focus early in the fighting. In the first months of 2004, however, the outside presence and support for insurgents increased. It became all too clear that such support was paying off well in terms of American and allied casualties, and in boosting the image of Islamic resistance as being able to take on the United States. This rise in violence helped lead the United States to decide to terminate the CPA and transfer sovereignty to Iraq in June, as discussed in the previous chapter.

The Elections Debate and Establishing the Interim Constitution

The debate over the timing and nature of elections intensified in early 2004. The November 15, 2003, agreement that established the ground rules for the election involved awkward compromises and problems in the allocation of power that raised very serious questions about the new system and its fairness. It recommended that the interim assembly that would govern until a permanent government could be elected be established by caucus rather than by direct elections.

In early 2004 the Shi'ites, led by Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, increasingly pushed for direct elections for the interim assembly. Direct elections clearly benefited the Shi'ite majority. Moreover, they had more political unity than Sunnis, and the Shi'ite clergy had some of the practical ability of political parties to mobilize votes.

The debate over elections was also linked to a broader political process that included writing the interim constitution, called the Transitional Administrative Law. This was supposed to be completed by March 1. The CPA spent much of the spring of 2004 seeking qualified candidates for the interim assembly, while al-Sistani and his loyalists continued to demand that it be chosen by elections. Some of al-Sistani's loyalists, including members of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, also wanted Islam to be declared the official religion of Iraq. The CPA, the Kurds, and the Sunnis opposed that addition.[3]

The Kurds also presented a series of demands. They wanted to ensure a level of autonomy in northern Iraq and wanted several provisions that would check the power of the majority Shi'ites. According to L. Paul Bremer's own account of the period, the Kurds brought a two-page list of demands to the table the day before the agreed signing of the TAL in March. Their main concerns were "their request for 'block grant' funds from the central treasury; the status of their militia [the Peshmerga]; and the right to veto the ratification of the constitution." The latter request drew the most opposition from Sunnis and Shi'ites.[4]

The TAL was eventually signed on March 8, 2004, although al-Sistani never really supported it. It followed the CPA path of selecting the interim assembly through committee rather than by direct elections, but it did set a January 2005 deadline for nationwide elections. There were ambiguities on numerous issues, however, that rolled over into more than 50 ambiguities in the final constitution written in 2006.

Militia and Civilian Disarmament Issues

The issue of disarming the militias was debated for much of the CPA's tenure in Iraq. However, it was not until February 2004—five months before it was disbanded—that the CPA really staffed the effort to disarm the major militias that had been elements of the resistance to Saddam, and it reached key agreements and only began to implement them in May 2004—when it was beginning to go out of business.

According to a U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, the CPA developed a transition and reintegration strategy for disbanding or controlling the

militias in late May 2004. CPA Order 91, which was issued in early June 2004, was intended to provide legal authority for implementing a transition and reintegration process. It declared militias outside of central government control, declaring them illegal except as provided by the order and law.[5]

The CPA's transition and reintegration strategy took three major approaches to disbanding or controlling militias operating outside the control of Iraq's central government: (1) recruiting militia members into officially recognized Iraqi security forces, (2) retiring some militia members with veterans' benefits, and (3) reintegrating others into Iraq's civil society and economy through education, training, and job placement.

On June 5, 2004, the CPA announced that nine parties that maintained militias had agreed to develop and implement transition and reintegration plans. The parties were the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Iraqi Islamic Party, Supreme Counsel of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq/Badr Organization, Iraqi National Accord, Iraqi National Congress, Iraqi Hezbollah, Iraqi Communist Party, and Islamic Al-Da'wa Party.

They then included roughly 100,000 former resistance fighters. The key militias involved included the Kurdish KDP militia that claimed some 41,000 men and the PUK militia that claimed 31,000. Together they were known as the Pershmerga and had a nominal strength of some 72,000 men. They also included the Badr Corps with a nominal strength of 16,000–16,500, and the six other militias mentioned in the previous paragraph.

In spite of the short time involved, the CPA was able to get an agreement in early June 2004 from all nine of these militias to disband or integrate into the Iraqi forces. The CPA estimated that about 90 percent of these individuals would complete the transition and reintegration process by January 2005—the rest would complete the process by October 2005. The CPA estimated that out of this total, about 60 percent of the militia members would transition into Iraqi security services—such as the Iraqi Armed Forces, Iraqi Police Service, or the Internal Security Forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The Kurds agreed to transform the Peshmerga into three elements that would still provide them with some element of security while serving the interest of the government: mountain rangers to guard the borders, a counterterrorism force, and a rapid reaction force. The other militias were to disband and either receive veterans' benefits or join the Iraqi military, the ICDC (predecessor of the National Guard), or the police. CPA Order 91 also established penalties for those who did not implement the agreement, which effectively banned any leaders and political movements that did not participate in the Iraqi political process.

This agreement did not, however, cover all militias operating in Iraq. Several smaller militias were not contacted because they were small, difficult to contact, or politically less important. Some militias decided to continue hostile operations against the Coalition rather than take part in the transition and reintegration process. Most importantly, the agreement did not include the Mahdi Army, the growing post-Saddam force loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr.

Both the CPA plans, and this agreement, were coordinated with the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministerial Committee for National Security. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and other Iraqi agencies (e.g., the Foreign Ministry, the Iraqi Intelligence Agency, and the Ministry of Education), came together in a body called the Transition and Reintegration Committee that was to administer the process after the transfer of authority, and it, in fact, began to do so in late May 2004.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs was critical to implementing one of the most innovative elements of the program: treating those in the militias opposing Saddam as if they were veterans in the Iraqi Army. For example, militias with 15 years of service became eligible for pensions, and those wounded with disabilities were treated as if they were soldiers. This was to be part of a $205 million program in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to provide a nationwide job training and placement program that included significant funding for veterans and to ease the impact of both employment problems and the tensions growing out of the breakup of Iraq's regular forces.

The team the CPA put together was able to achieve a great deal in its negotiations, but the effort began too late to be implemented while the CPA was still in power; the new Iraqi government failed to implement it. As part of the transfer of power, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs all gained new ministers and none gave implementing the CPA's plans of militia integration any serious priority.

The new Minister of Defense resisted any effort to integrate any militia in a movement with a religious character into the armed forces, and the new Minister of Finance did not implement the prime minister's decision to fund the $9.7 million program recommended under the CPA. Even more serious, the new minister of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs canceled the nationwide job training and placement program, effectively eliminating one of the key aspects of the veterans program for either the militia personnel who qualified or those in the Iraqi forces under Saddam Hussein.

The situation grew steadily worse as it became clear that al-Sadr's Mahdi Army posed a threat to the Shi'ite and other militias operating in the south and the east, and the insurgency steadily grew in strength. It also became clear that CPA Order 91 was effectively dead and that the Iraqi Interim Government could not afford to take action against leaders and parties simply because they maintained militias. The fighting against al-Sadr in the fall of 2004 further reinforced the reluctance of such militias and parties to comply.

Iraqi Public Opinion

In order to understand Iraqi attitudes, it is important to note that the Governing Council was not a legitimate political body simply because the Coalition said it was. Many, if not most, Iraqis seemed willing to accept it—at least until real elections could be held. It was clearly a Coalition body, however, and the CPA was appointing

ministers and deputy ministers for its government before it acquired legal sovereignty on June 28.

It is not surprising, therefore, that a February 2004 ABC public opinion poll found significant Shi'ite opposition to the Coalition, even before the major battles during this period. If one looks at the overall pattern of Iraqi resentment and hostility, the ABC poll found the following results:

- Figure 4.1 shows Sunni, Shi'ite and Kurdish opinion on the presence of U.S. forces and the invasion. The majority of Sunnis and a significant number of Shi'ites felt that the invasion was humiliating for Iraq. These results reveal the extent to which the United States failed to incorporate the Sunnis in the nation-building process, with possibly deadly consequences; 77 percent of Sunnis in Anbar Province supported attacks on Coalition forces. It also shows the significant difference between public opinion among Shi'ites in southern Iraq compared with Shi'ites living elsewhere, who were clearly influenced by al-Sadr's movement.
- Figure 4.2 shows Iraqi preferences for future governance. Most Iraqis agreed that their country should remain a single unified state, but a significant 47 percent felt that Iraq needed a strong leader at the time, in order to transition into democracy. Further, only 1 percent of Iraqis felt that the CPA should be leading the country. Equally important, any such leaders could emerge in an Iraq with only half-formed political parties, without experience in leadership at the national level and in making practical compromises with other leaders, and having to govern untried institutions that the calendar shows would be in a constant state of change and turmoil.
- Figure 4.3 shows Iraqi standards of living. Some 70 percent of all Iraqis polled said their lives were going well in February 2004, and most remained optimistic that in one year they would see significant improvement. Unfortunately, however, these numbers would fall sharply in coming years; by February 2007 only 39 percent said their lives were going well.

The ABC poll questioned Iraqis on other areas of life. Iraqis were most frustrated with the availability of jobs; 69 percent said the situation was bad. Additionally, 64 percent said the availability of electricity was bad. Local schools were rated positively (by 72 percent), and smaller majorities gave positive ratings to the availability of basic household goods and the adequacy of local crime protection. About half gave positive ratings to the availability of medical care, clean water and household goods beyond the basics, and to local government.

These figures do not describe an Iraqi people that was hostile as a whole or as a majority. They do describe an extremely volatile situation, one where military operations that fought in and occupied Iraqi residential areas—and produced civilian casualties, collateral damage, and new "martyrs"—could potentially put far more hostiles on the street than they removed.

This was particularly true because the Arab media were largely providing very hostile coverage, the CPA and IGC public affairs and media efforts remained largely ineffective, and U.S. and Coalition operations were easy to tie to Israeli operations

Figure 4.1 Iraqi Public Opinion on the Coalition Presence, February 2004*

Was Iraq Humiliated or Liberated?		
Percent Saying Humiliated	Sunnis	66%
	Shi'ites	37%
	Kurds	11%
	Anbar Province	83%
	Sunni triangle	75%
	South	27%
	Elsewhere	53%
Was the Invasion Right or Wrong?		
Percent Saying Wrong	Sunnis	63%
	Shi'ites	35%
	Kurds	9%
	Anbar Province	82%
	Sunni triangle	71%
	South	28%
	Elsewhere	47%
Presence of Coalition Troops		
Percent Opposing	Sunnis	29%
	Shi'ites	12%
	Kurds	2%
Percent Strongly Oppose	Anbar Province	76%
	Sunni triangle	63%
Percent Saying Should Leave Now	Anbar Province	65%
	Sunni triangle	38%
Are Attacks on U.S. Forces Acceptable?		
Percent Saying Yes	Sunnis	36%
	Shi'ites	12%
	Kurds	2%
	Anbar Province	71%
	Sunni triangle	44%

* These results are from an ABC News poll conducted among a random, representative sample of 2,737 Iraqis in face-to-face interviews across the country from February 9–28, 2004. The poll was cosponsored with ABC by the German broadcasting network ARD, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and the NHK in Japan, with sampling and field work by Oxford Research International of Oxford, England.

Source: ABC News Poll, "Iraq: Where Things Stand," March 15, 2004.

and "occupation," while the hostile Iraqis could be compared to the Palestinians in the Intifada.

The issue then and now was not simply serious core hostility to the United States, the Coalition, and the IGC; it was the much broader issue of just how many Iraqis would still regard the Coalition nation-building effort as legitimate when the fighting was over and put faith in the Iraqi government and security forces.

Figure 4.2 Preferences for Iraq's Future Governance*

	All	Arabs	Kurds
Unified country, central government in Baghdad	79%	90%	26%
	In 1 year	**In 5 years**	
Single strong Iraqi leader	47%	35%	
Iraqi democracy	28%	42%	
Islamic Al-Da'wa Party	14%		
Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)	11%		
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)	10%		
Iraqi Islamic Party	6%		
Higher Council of Islamic Revolution	5%		
Government of religious leaders	10%	10%	
Group of strong Iraqi leaders	3%	3%	
Government of experts/managers	2%	2%	
Iraqi Governing Council	2%	†	
UN transition government	1%	1%	
Government of Iraqi military leaders	1%	†	
Coalition Provisional Authority	1%	1%	
Regional states with a federal government	14%	5%	58%
Divide into separate independent states	4%	2%	12%

* These results are from an ABC News poll conducted among a random, representative sample of 2,737 Iraqis in face-to-face interviews across the country from February 9–28, 2004. The poll was cosponsored with ABC by the German broadcasting network ARD, the BBC, and the NHK in Japan, with sampling and field work by Oxford Research International of Oxford, England.

† Less than 0.5 percent.

Source: ABC News Poll, "Iraq: Where Things Stand," March 15, 2004.

Training Iraqi Security Forces

Somewhat ironically, the Coalition's early efforts to create and train new Iraqi security forces were seen at the time as one of the Coalition's biggest successes. The Iraqi public expressed confidence in their progression. In the ABC poll conducted in February 2004, 68 percent of Iraqis expressed confidence in the new Iraqi police, up from 45 percent in November 2003; and 56 percent expressed confidence in the new Iraqi Army, up from 39 percent in November (see Figure 4.4). The new Iraqi security forces had become the two most trusted "government" entities in the country, in spite of the fact that they hardly existed and played a negligible role in providing security and countering the rising violence.

These attitudes seem to have been shaped largely by an Iraqi desire to see Coalition forces move out of their daily lives, and they come before the various security forces transitioned to Iraqi control. It was not clear, for example, how effective or popular the security services would be after the U.S. presence in Baghdad was reduced, as was planned.

Figure 4.3 Iraqi Standard of Living

	All	North	South	Central	Baghdad
How things are going today:					
Percent Saying Good	70%	85%	65%	70%	6%
Percent Saying Bad	29%	14%	34%	28%	32%
Compared to a year ago, before the war:					
Better	56%	70%	63%	54%	46%
Same	23%	15%	21%	22%	31%
Worse	19%	13%	13%	23%	23%
How they will be a year from now:					
Better	71%	83%	74%	70%	63%
Same	9%	4%	6%	10%	16%
Worse	7%	1%	4%	9%	10%

Note: These results are from an ABC News poll conducted among a random, representative sample of 2,737 Iraqis in face-to-face interviews across the country from February 9–28, 2004. The poll was cosponsored with ABC by the German broadcasting network ARD, the British Broadcasting System (BBC), and the NHK in Japan, with sampling and field work by Oxford Research International of Oxford, England.

Source: ABC News Poll, "Iraq: Where Things Stand," March 15, 2004.

Moreover, while the total numbers of Iraqi security personnel were rising, standards of training and equipment levels were not. The police and security forces remained badly equipped in terms of communications, protection, and weapons. The U.S. Army contracting effort to equip the new Iraqi Army had been little short of a disaster and delayed the flow of equipment for months.

The Department of Defense reported the status of Iraqi forces as of March 22, 2004, as shown in Figure 4.5.

Rightly or wrongly, Iraqis saw strong military forces as an essential part of nation building and of Iraq's status and dignity as a nation. They remembered the successes of the Iran-Iraq War and the very real courage of many Iraqi units in the Gulf War and the Iraq War.

Figure 4.4 Confidence in Iraqi Forces*

Percent Confidence In	November 2003	February 2004
New Iraqi police	45%	68%
New Iraqi Army	39%	56%

* These results are from an ABC News poll conducted among a random, representative sample of 2,737 Iraqis in face-to-face interviews across the country from February 9–28, 2004. The poll was cosponsored with ABC by the German broadcasting network ARD, the BBC, and the NHK in Japan, with sampling and field work by Oxford Research International of Oxford, England.

Source: ABC News Poll, "Iraq: Where Things Stand," March 15, 2004.

Figure 4.5 Misleading Metrics on Iraqi Force Readiness

Service	Required	Untrained On Payroll	On Duty Partially Qualified	On Duty Fully Qualified	In Training	Total
Border Police	8,835	0	8,259	0	521	8,780
Dept. of Border Enforcement	16,892	0	9,873	0	0	9,870
Police Service	75,000	59,638	12,422	2,324	3,840	78,250
Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC)	40,000	0	0	33,560	1,933	35,400
Iraqi Armed Forces (IAF)	40,000	0	0	3,005	2,169	5,170
Facilities Protection Service (FPS)	55,500	0	0	73,992	0	73,992

U.S. plans were not adequate to meet these goals. The Department of Defense plans for rebuilding the Iraqi Army issued in February 2004 assumed "no major external conventional threat to Iraq in the near term (FY05–06)." It also called for Coalition forces to remain in Iraq until the army and the police could deal with internal security threats. Many Iraqis saw this as necessary, but many also saw it as a plan for occupation.

One key issue was transitioning to U.S.–supported Iraqi military and security operations against Islamists. There was evidence that the threat was becoming less and less tied to former regime loyalists and more and more tied to a mix of Iraqi Sunnis who feared the transition to a new state, native Islamic extremists, and foreign Islamic volunteers. In the past, U.S. intelligence focused largely on former regime loyalist cells. U.S. officers were now talking about new local Sunni movements like Ansar al-Sunna and some six foreign Islamist cells in the greater Baghdad area as well as eight to ten such cells in Anbar Province in the west. The funding of much of the insurgent effort also seemed to have shifted from Ba'athist to local and Islamic groups.

Economic Development

The problems in politics and governance that helped shape the insurgency and civil violence were compounded by problems in economic development. Far too often, the task was described as reconstruction. This simply was not the case. From the early 1970s on, Iraq invested primarily in guns and in butter only on a secondary level. It never took effective steps toward agricultural reform; indeed, it was importing Egyptian peasants as workers when the Iran-Iraq War began. Its efforts at industrialization focused first on military industries and then on state civil industries. It

did use its brief peak of oil wealth in the late 1970s and early 1980s to buy turnkey industrial projects from Europe, but virtually every such effort was badly planned and began to fail the moment the key was turned.

The Iraqi educational system, construction, and infrastructure were well funded and relatively well managed through the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War, but the war was so costly that the regime began to run out of money by 1982. By 1984, even massive aid and foreign loans meant that investment in civil development either ceased or suffered massive cutbacks while the regime's effort to maintain education in spite of the Iran-Iraq War began to fail. The Iran-Iraq War lasted until 1988, leaving a legacy of massive debt. Saddam still spent on guns from 1989–1990, and the Gulf War and then UN sanctions followed. Between 1991 and 2003, a command economy turned into a command kleptocracy, where the Ba'ath elite took what they wanted, significant financial resources went to securing the regime, and the people took what they could simply to survive. The end result was that much of Iraq's economy, infrastructure, educational system, and overall development were sized more for a nation of 16–18 million rather than for one of 25–26 million.

Iraqis had to learn to live with very little, with poor services and infrastructure, and limited opportunity. The end result, however, was that most Iraqis increasingly came to care more about their own material progress and security than they did about the political calendar, and such progress was critical to winning hearts and minds for the new government and a peaceful political process.

The United States and the Coalition did make progress in a number of economic and social areas, but the overall requirements were high, expectations were rising, and serious problems remained. The scale of these problems was clear even if one accepted the very strange—almost Soviet-like—measure of progress being issued by the Department of Defense and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In a key area like electric power, for example, Iraq was now generating some 4,100 megawatts (MW), but Figure 4.6 shows the goal had risen from around 4,400 MW to 6,000 MW, and the totals disguised major regional issues.

By early 2004, USAID rehabilitated some 2,350 schools. However, the CPA calculated that a total of 11,939 still needed repairs and some 4,500 new schools needed to be built to provide adequate education. Iraq needed also some 1.4 million new housing units, and the CPA had issued contracts for 3,528.

Unemployment shrunk from 50–60 percent to 22.5–35 percent in early 2004, but only because of subsidies, aid jobs, and a reduction in those looking for work; and underemployment in meaningless dead-end jobs was not counted. Even so, the

Figure 4.6 Iraqi Power Generation: Prewar to June 2004

MW/Hour	North	Center	South
Prewar	1,200	2,300	500
June 2003	1,719	1,201	815
October 2003	1,700	2,100	600
Jun 2004 Goal	2,330	2,350	1,320

Ministry of Planning announced an unemployment rate of 28 percent and an underemployment rate of 21.6 percent, a total of 49.6 percent affected. Coalition Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF-7) estimated that CPA created 379,721 jobs for Iraqis (45 percent of the CJTF-7 target of 850,000):

- Security/National Defense: 220,923
- CJTF-7: 51,673
- Civilian contractors working under CPA contracts: 68,154
- Governorate Teams: 1,550

Oil production was already becoming a problem at this time. Estimates of rapid increases in output proved totally unrealistic, and production averaged around 2.388 million barrels per day (mbpd) in March 2004 versus 2.5 mbpd peak levels before the war. Exports averaged around 1.6 mbpd. Total oil export revenues dropped from $13.2 billion in 2002, however, to only $5.1 billion in 2003.

U.S. and other economic aid helped ease these problems. The rate of U.S. obligation as a percent of the FY2004 aid budget by project type is shown below in Figure 4.7—*remembering that even "obligated" does not mean actual spending was taking place or that Iraqis were seeing any real progress in terms of actual project completions*.

Money was moving into the Iraqi economy. Several billion dollars worth of aid money had been spent in the CPA's tenure, and Iraq oil revenues and recoveries of

Figure 4.7 U.S. Aid FY2004

Category	Total in 2004 Report	Obligated	Percent Obligated
	(Aid Request in billions)		
Security & Law Enforcement	3,243	351.6	11%
Electricity Sector	5,560	1,038.2	18%
Oil Infrastructure	1,701	451.6	27%
Justice, Public Safety, and Civil Society	560	32.1	6%
Democracy Building	458	155.3	34%
Education, Refugees, Human Rights, and Governance	280	155.3	55%
Road, Bridges, and Construction	370	4	1.1%
Health Care	793	0	0
Transportation and Telecommunications	500	6.3	1.3%
Water Resources and Sanitation	4,332	38.9	0.9%
Private Sector Development	184	0	0
Total	18,439	2087.5	11%
Construction	12,611	1,355.3	11%
Nonconstruction	5,370	576.6	11%
Democracy	458	155.3	34%

Saddam's money provided additional funds. However, these figures did reflect a very slow rate of progress in a number of critical areas, given the urgency of taking action. It was also clear by the spring of 2004 that many projects would just be starting or would still be unobligated when the new Iraqi government took over from the CPA in June 2004. For example, CPA officials talked about some 2,300 construction projects over a four-year period, but it was Iraqis and not the CPA that would really make the hard choices.

Many projects were being built to U.S. standards rather than Iraqi ones, and the history of such aid projects is that they often are not sustained once they are turned over to the recipient country. The overall planning of aid also had to be improvised after May 2003, and often without anything approaching a realistic survey of Iraqi needs. Furthermore, at least some of the planning was done more on the basis of U.S. experience and a free market ideology than an effort to deal with economic reform in Iraqi terms.

The slow rate of progress in the developing oil sector was particularly disturbing because Iraq may have been overproducing its oil reservoirs in some areas and compromising long-term recovery. It was also clear that while many Iraqis in the Oil Ministry and oil companies were personally competent, war and sanctions ensured that they have almost no practical experience with the new exploration, drilling, and reservoir management technology that has come to dominate cutting-edge petroleum operations in the Gulf.

Efforts to deal with the conversion or revitalization of state industries, and aggressive efforts to encourage the private sector, were deferred to the new Iraqi government. This greatly increased the burden placed on the new Iraqi government that took over in June 2004. Subsidized employment was not a career, either in state industries or as a result of aid. Iraq had to rapidly develop a real economy for what had become a heavily urbanized society and not only break away from a command kleptocracy, but also from one where military industry and construction played far too large a role.

The overriding issue, however, was that the CPA's transfer of power to an Iraqi government took place without clear discussions as to where the overall aid process was headed, what kind of new economy the Iraqis wanted to create, and how longer-term plans and efforts could be created that were tailored to Iraq's real needs and expectations. The lack of any long-term plan and coherent effort based on a detailed assessment of Iraqi needs would haunt the aid process in the years to come.

THE INSURGENCY TAKES ON A MORE VIOLENT AND SECTARIAN CHARACTER

The frequency of attacks against U.S. troops showed that the fighting had become a guerrilla war rather than a terrorist campaign. The insurgents had also become more sophisticated and staged planned attacks against Coalition forces, engaging them in pitched, urban warfare battles that caused significant casualties on both sides.

At the same time, sectarian and ethnic attacks became more frequent. Attacks against U.S. forces fell temporarily in the early winter of 2004, while attacks against Iraqi forces and civilians increased.

The following large-scale insurgent attacks illustrate the kind of major incidents that occurred during the first half of 2004:

- February 1, 2004: Twin suicide bombers kill 109 people in two Kurdish party offices in Irbil.
- February 10, 2004: A suicide bomber explodes a truckload of explosives outside a police station in Iskandariyah, killing 53 people.
- February 11, 2004: A suicide attacker blows up a car packed with explosives in a crowd of Iraqis waiting outside an army recruiting center in Baghdad, killing 47 people.
- February 14, 2004: Insurgents attack a police station in Fallujah, overrunning it and releasing dozens of prisoners.
- February 18, 2004: Polish troops thwart twin suicide car bombs as the vehicles approach a Coalition base in Hillah, south of Baghdad. The speeding trucks explode prematurely, killing 11 Iraqi civilians and wounding as many as 100, including nearly 60 Coalition troops from Poland, Hungary, and the United States.
- February 23, 2004: At least 10 people are killed and over 35 are injured when a car bomb explodes outside a Kirkuk police station.
- March 2, 2004: Coordinated blasts from suicide bombers, mortars, and planted explosives strike Shi'ite Muslim shrines in Karbala and in Baghdad, killing at least 181 and wounding 573.
- March 9, 2004: Iraqi policemen deliberately kill two CPA officials and their Iraqi translator 70 miles south of Baghdad. The "targeted killings" are the first American civilian deaths in Iraq.
- March 17, 2004: Seven people die when a car bomb levels the Mount Lebanon Hotel in Baghdad.
- March 18, 2004: Four Iraqis die in an explosion outside the Mirbad Hotel in Basra. Locals are said to have attacked and killed the suspected perpetrator.
- March 23, 2004: Attacks against Iraqi police persist; 11 Iraqi policemen are killed in separate attacks in Kirkuk and Hillah.
- March 25, 2004: A bomb explodes at an oil field in Khabaz, about 55 miles west of Kirkuk. The ensuing fire rages for 24 hours before being extinguished.
- March 31, 2004: In one of the most gruesome scenes since the conflict began, four American civilian contractors are killed in an ambush in Fallujah. Jubilant crowds then drag the charred bodies through the streets and hang them from a bridge. Some corpses are dismembered and displayed above a sign that reads, "Fallujah is the graveyard of Americans."

Attacks against Coalition forces, however, increased again by March and April. As mentioned in the preceding list, on March 31, 2004, insurgents in Fallujah killed four Blackwater USA security guards and hung their bodies on a bridge. The

incident shocked U.S. officials and the American public, reflecting the lack of official reporting on the growing Sunni support for the insurgency. The problem of Fallujah, however, was compounded by a political crisis that threatened to derail the transfer of sovereignty. Heavy guerrilla warfare intensified throughout the Sunni triangle and caused a sharp increase in U.S. casualties in April and May. The role of the Shi'ites also increased in April, led by al-Sadr and his Mahdi militia. The young, firebrand cleric continued to oppose the Coalition presence and clashed with some of the Shi'ite leaders involved in shaping the future of Iraq.

The Role of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi

The first half of 2004 was also marked by the growing influence of neo-Salafi insurgents. The U.S. emphasis on former regime loyalists and the overall denial of Sunni opposition to the Coalition, however, clouded the growth of more extremist elements. By June, however, these insurgents clearly formed the most violent base of the insurgency.

The steady growth of Sunni Islamic elements in the insurgency was exemplified by the rise of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Al-Zarqawi's organization, Jamaat al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad, was not initially affiliated with Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'ida, as the U.S. government believed. The association between the two terror leaders began slightly less than a year after the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

On February 9, 2004, the U.S. military intercepted a document written by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The 17-page document detailed a planned campaign of violence meant to destabilize Iraq by pitting religious and ethnic groups against one another. Expressing frustration with the insurgency's failure to force out American troops, al-Zarqawi asked al-Qa'ida for assistance in accelerating guerrilla activities.

Al-Zarqawi was a Jordanian who served a seven-year sentence for efforts to overthrow the Jordanian government; he began to attack targets in Jordan long before he went to Iraq. These attacks against Jordanian targets included the following:[6]

- January 17, 1998: Masked men raid a dinner party at the hillside mansion of wealthy Iraqi businessmen in Amman, slitting the throats of a top Baghdad diplomat and seven other people.
- March 28, 1998: A crude bomb explodes in an elite English-language school in Amman in what one senior government official calls an apparent attempt to instigate attacks against Americans. The explosion shatters windows but causes no injuries.
- October 28, 2002: An American diplomat, Laurence Michael Foley, is assassinated in front of his house in Amman, gunned down in the first such attack on a U.S. diplomat in decades.
- August 7, 2003: A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 17 people, including 2 children. More than 50 people are wounded.

Al-Zarqawi was one of the first Sunni insurgent leaders to focus on attacks both inside and outside Iraq. There were indications that al-Zarqawi's group began

planning and attempting attacks outside Iraq in late 2003. It was clear that one major attempt did occur in the spring of 2004.

Jordan reported that an al-Zarqawi agent named Azmi al-Jayousi led a cell that attempted to carry out a massive explosive and chemical attack on the U.S. Embassy, the headquarters of the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, office of the prime minister, and other targets in Amman in mid-April 2004. Jordanian officials said they had halted an attack using three trucks loaded with 20 tons of explosives and chemicals. The three trucks were halted in Irbid, and Jordanian sources reported that they could have killed 80,000 people and wounded 160,000 others within a two-square-kilometer area. The cell was one of two cells in place, and its members had a variety of forged Jordanian, Syrian, and other Arab passports

Al-Zarqawi acknowledged this attempt in an audiotape circulated on April 30, 2004, but denied any effort to use chemical weapons. The tape made available on an Islamist Web site said his goal was to "totally destroy the building of the Jordanian intelligence services" with "raw materials which are sold on the market . . . The Jordanian security services have lied in claiming to have foiled a plan to kill innocent Muslims."[7]

He accused Jordan of "creating an outcry and presenting the Jordanian people as a victim targeted at the hands of terrorism . . . in order to hide the sordid face of the Jordanian intelligence services . . ." and the "evil Jordanian services" of "fabricating (the affair) of the chemical bomb." Al-Zarqawi went on to say,

> If we had such a bomb . . . and we ask God that we have such a bomb soon—we would not hesitate for a moment to strike Israeli towns, such as Eilat, Tel Aviv and others . . . We have scores to settle with this [Jordanian] government which will turn children's hair white.[8]

Al-Zarqawi's group began to play a major role in attacking Iraqi targets in early 2004. On March 2, 2004, five suicide bombers detonated their explosives in the Shi'ite shrine cities of Karbala and Kadhimain, killing over 250 and wounding 570 on the Shi'ite Ashura holiday. The Al-Zarqawi letter acquired by the CPA included instructions to incite civil war by attacking Iraqi Shi'a.

The letter said as follows of the Shi'a and the basis for al-Zarqawi's sectarian attacks:

> Our current situation, as I have previously told you, obliges us to deal with the matter with courage and clarity and to move quickly to do so because we consider that [unless we do so] there will be no result in which religion will appear. The solution that we see, and God the Exalted knows better, is for us to drag the Shi'a into the battle because this is the only way to prolong the fighting between us and the infidels. We say that we must drag them into battle for several reasons, which are:
>
> 1 - They, i.e., the Shi'a, have declared a secret war against the people of Islam. They are the proximate, dangerous enemy of the Sunnis, even if the Americans are also an archenemy. The danger from the Shi'a, however, is greater and their damage is worse

and more destructive to the [Islamic] nation than the Americans, on whom you find a quasi-consensus about killing them as an assailing enemy.

2 - They have befriended and supported the Americans and stood in their ranks against the mujahidin. They have spared and are still sparing no effort to put an end to the jihad and the mujahidin.

3 - Our fighting against the Shi'a is the way to drag the [Islamic] nation into the battle. We speak here in some detail. We have said before that the Shi'a have put on the uniforms of the Iraqi army, police, and security [forces] and have raised the banner of preserving the homeland and the citizen. Under this banner, they have begun to liquidate the Sunnis under the pretext that they are saboteurs, remnants of the Ba'ath, and terrorists spreading evil in the land. With strong media guidance from the Governing Council and the Americans, they have been able to come between the Sunni masses and the mujahidin. I give an example that brings the matter close to home in the area called the Sunni Triangle—if this is the right name for it. The army and police have begun to deploy in those areas and are growing stronger day by day. They have put chiefs [drawn] from among Sunni agents and the people of the land in charge. In other words, this army and police may be linked to the inhabitants of this area by kinship, blood, and honor. In truth, this area is the base from which we set out and to which we return. When the Americans disappear from these areas—and they have begun to do so—and these agents, who are linked by destiny to the people of the land, take their place, what will our situation be?[9]

Al-Zarqawi's sectarianism and the growing presence of neo-Salafi insurgents in Iraq were compounded by the CPA and the Governing Council's denial of the threat. At the same time, the rhetoric of Shi'ite religious leaders became politicized and denounced the Sunni insurgent attacks on Shi'ite targets.[10]

The growing attacks against Shi'ites helped push Iraq toward civil conflict. There was no critical moment that marked the transition to civil conflict, but it was clear that al-Zarqawi and other Sunni Islamist insurgents sought to incite sectarian violence as early as late 2003. Attacks against Shi'ite targets would only increase over the years, intensifying sectarian and ethnic tensions and moving the country into a growing civil conflict that the Coalition was increasingly challenged to resolve. Shi'ite reprisal attacks became more public after the bombing of the Askariya shrine in February 2006, but Shi'ite criminal gangs and militias engaged in reprisal attacks as early as 2004 and Shi'ite politicians fought to limit the role of Sunnis in Iraq's new government.

The Fallujah Dilemma

The majority Sunni city of Fallujah, located in al Anbar Province just west of Baghdad became a key center for Sunni insurgent activity. It had grown increasingly hostile to the Coalition presence through 2003. Unemployment was close to 60 percent, and Sunnis felt betrayed and underrepresented by the political process in Baghdad. The U.S. presence in al Anbar Province was minimal, especially in the far western desert areas and the border crossing with Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

As discussed in the previous chapter, foreign insurgents used the border with Syria to enter Iraq and fight the Coalition. As a result, Fallujah become dominated by discontented young Sunni men and a growing number of neo-Salafi insurgents.

The deaths of the four Blackwater USA security guards on March 31, 2004, prompted a response from the U.S. government. President George W. Bush told Gen. John Abizaid, now the commander of U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), to prepare an assault on Fallujah. The military plan, however, drew sharp criticism from the Sunni members of the Iraqi Governing Council. They threatened to withdraw from the political process, which would effectively prevent the transfer of sovereignty.

In early April the Marines built up their presence in Fallujah, engaging the enemy in firefights that killed dozens of insurgents. A total of 39 U.S. troops also died in the fighting. On April 9, however, President Bush called off the attack of Fallujah and instead ordered the Marines to maintain a presence around the city, trapping the insurgents inside. The troops, however, were soon trapped themselves, unable to use the supply roads covered in improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The Sunni members of the IGC did agree to stay on, and progress toward sovereignty continued.[11]

At the end of April, a former Ba'athist officer approached U.S. officials and said that he could form a brigade of Iraqis to clear out Fallujah. Both Bremer and General Abizaid have said that they did not know about the creation of the "Fallujah Brigade." The brigade entered the city wearing old Iraqi uniforms and its leader, Jassim Mohammad Saleh, had been accused of killing thousands of Shi'ites in Karbala in 1991. Saleh was soon replaced by Mohamad Latif for this reason.

The Fallujah Brigade was hugely unsuccessful, and as Thomas E. Ricks writes in *Fiasco,* "It wasn't long before the Falluja Brigade became indistinguishable from the insurgency." The United States turned security over to the Brigade in June 2004, just weeks before the transfer of power. One Marine commander said of the city, "Falluja was like a siren, calling to the insurgents."[12] Publicly, the U.S. government declared the First Battle of Fallujah a success. These statements would be violently discredited later that year.

The end result was that the U.S. military launched large-scale campaigns against the insurgency in Fallujah and other Sunni-dominated areas in the spring of 2004. These offensives tended to be displays of force and sometimes resulted in significant collateral damage. They were not aimed at winning over the civilian population, but rather at killing, capturing, and intimidating the insurgents. These offensives were tactically successful, resulted in hundreds of insurgent deaths, but in most cases, U.S. forces did not stay and "hold" the areas and the insurgents soon returned, running over the token Iraqi forces in the process.

THE ROLE OF THE SHI'ITES: CLASHES BETWEEN U.S. FORCES AND THE MAHDI ARMY

Shi'ite discontent with the lack of security and the political process and increasing sectarian insurgent attacks led to direct clashes with the United States. Moqtada al-

Sadr and his militia engaged in attacks against U.S. and Coalition forces and rival Shi'ite groups, and in reprisal attacks against Sunnis in 2004.

The Sadr militia—whose formal title was the *Jaysh al-Mahdi*—began playing a role in the intrasect Shi'ite power struggle as early as October 2003. Al-Sadr's men had attacked supporters of moderate Shi'ite Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani near the Imam Hussein shrine.[13] This attack heightened already deep tensions between al-Sadr and al-Sistani.

After a period of calm, the Mahdi Army or JAM presented a growing threat to Coalition and government forces in Najaf, in Sadr City in Baghdad, and in other Shi'ite areas in the south during much of the spring of 2004. In March, al-Sadr's militia attacked the gypsy village of Qawliya with mortars and armed men, killing many of the residents.

Also in March, the Mahdi Army carried out an intimidation campaign against police forces and Italian troops in the southern province of Dhi Qar. At the climax of the tension, the militia forced members of the district council to resign at gunpoint. The town was turned over to Sadrist control and was a base for kidnappings and other looting activities. These actions forced the Coalition to react.

At the end of March, the Coalition shut down the Sadrist newsletter *al-Hamza* and several days later arrested a senior aide to al-Sadr, Mustafa al-Yaqubi. On April 4, al-Sadr called on his militia to seize control across central and southern Iraq. The Sadrists had some control over the cities of Kut and Nasiriya, but the main force of their uprising was concentrated in Najaf. Ali A. Allawi, the new Interim Defense Minister, said of the Sadrists' goals at the time:

> The Sadrist's plan was to combine just enough of a military challenge, with control over the city of Najaf, the symbolic capital of the Iraqi Shi'a. They were quite sure that a seize-and-hold strategy, with continuous harassment, street demonstrations and the sowing of civil disorder, would eventually wear out the CPA, fearful as it would be of the adverse consequences of a frontal assault on their positions. This would be especially true if the Coalition tried to force them out of the [Imam Ali] shrine in Najaf. Religious leaders on the Governing Council and the Marji'iyya were horrified at the possible effects of a full-blown attack on the shrine to dislodge the Mahdi Army.[14]

Michael Knights and Ed Williams describe the situation in southern Iraq as follows:

> In scenes reminiscent of the 1991 uprisings, Iraqi security forces either stood aside or joined in with the uprising for as long as fortune seemed to favor the rebels. As in previous uprisings, the initial days of the rebellion witnesses a collective venting of discontent across a broad range of locations. Pan-Shiite and cross-sectarian Iraqi solidarity drew a surprising range of Islamist actors into anti-coalition activities. By and large, most Iraqis remained nonaligned and looked on . . .
>
> The patterns of the uprising reflected the political climate in Shiite Iraq and the strengths and the weaknesses of the Sadrist trend. As with previous uprisings in 1991 and 1999, the action became centered on Najaf and Karbala. Also mirroring previous

uprisings, the Jaysh al-Mahdi held the initiative for only a very short time, lasting between April 4 and 7. From this point onward, the bulk of Sadrist forces in Najaf and Karbala were militarily contained and whittled away over a period of months, with a sharp resurgence in fighting in Najaf during the late summer that was more akin to a "last stand" than an uprising...

Although the April 2004 uprising was initiated by the centralized leadership of the [Sadrist movement] in response to attacks on its organs and membership, the uprising and the months of intermittent fighting afterward highlighted the fractious nature of the Sadrist movement. The extremely rapid geographic spread of the April uprising was due to the many months of preparation for such a showdown and fairly tight communications links between [Sadr] and the various local chapters of the Jaysh al-Mahdi. From this moment onward, however, decentralized control of the Jaysh al-Mahdi quickly degraded...At this point, the centralized leadership's inability to stop an uprising became clear: the Jaysh al-Mahdi did not answer to centralized command. In a sign of desperation, Sadr secretly requested Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to issue a statement to demobilize the Jaysh al-Mahdi, but the "quietist" preacher refused for fear of being held responsible for any subsequent postuprising arrest of Sadr.[15]

The lack of clear centralized control of the Mahdi Army was a problem that became even more apparent in the years to come. Operations also took place in Sadr City, the Shi'ite district of roughly 2.2 million in northeastern Baghdad. Al-Sadr lost a large number of his forces during these campaigns, but he would return at the end of the summer in a new offensive against U.S. troops that lasted through October. Low-intensity fighting during this period included the following kinds of actions:

- April 4, 2004: The followers of Moqtada al-Sadr, a militant Shi'ite cleric espousing fiercely anti-American rhetoric, march through at least six Iraqi cities, seizing control of the area around Kufa and killing nine Coalition troops—seven in Sadr City alone. The violence began when demonstrations supporting al-Sadr and his deputy, who was arrested the previous day, clash with Coalition forces in Najaf and in Sadr City.
- April 6, 2004: At least 20 American soldiers die in three days of ferocious fighting in central and southern Iraq. Coalition forces suddenly face a war on two fronts: against the Sunnis in central Iraq and against the Shi'ites in the south. Fighting continues to rage in Sadr City and Fallujah. Al-Sadr's militiamen clash with Iraqi security forces in Najaf, Nasiriya, Basra, and Baghdad. In Kufa, Shi'ite opposition forces replace police, essentially creating an occupation-free zone. Al-Sadr urges his followers to carry on fighting and proclaims his solidarity with Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, claiming to be "his military wing in Iraq." Al-Sistani, for his part, asks Shi'ites to remain calm.
- April 7, 2004: Coalition troops clash with opposition fighters throughout central and southern Iraq, and as far north as Kirkuk. U.S. forces drop a 500-pound bomb on a mosque compound in Fallujah. Ukrainian troops evacuate Qut after confrontations with al-Sadr's "Mahdi Army." Polish forces combat opposition in Karbala.
- April 8, 2004: Al-Sadr's militiamen maintain control of Kufa, Qut, and parts of Najaf.
- April 12, 2004: Al-Sadr withdraws his militia from Najaf, Karbala, and Kufa in a bid to stave off an American assault.

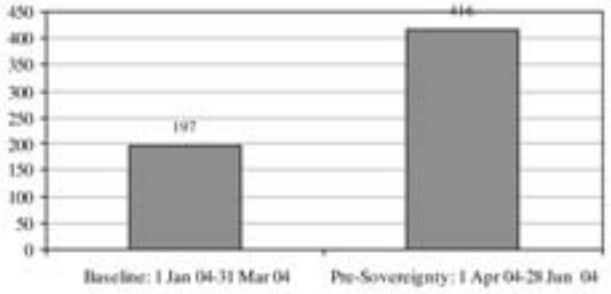
- May 15, 2004: Coalition forces battle Shi'ite fighters in Najaf, Karbala, Al Amara, Nasiriya, and Sadr City.
- May 18, 2004: Fighting between Coalition Forces and insurgents continues in Najaf.
- May 23, 2004: U.S. troops strike fighters loyal to al-Sadr in Kufa, killing 36. Al-Sadr's militia appears to withdraw from the Shrine of Hussein in Karbala.
- May 25, 2004: For the second time in a month, the Shrine of Imam Ali, one of the holiest sites for Shi'ite Muslims, is damaged when U.S. forces clash with militiamen loyal to al-Sadr in Najaf and Kufa. American commanders deny damaging the shrine. At least 13 Iraqis die.
- May 29, 2004: Fighting continues between U.S. forces and al-Sadr's militia in Najaf despite al-Sadr's offer to withdraw his Mahdi Army from Najaf as a compromise.
- May 31, 2004: A peace deal seems less likely after two American soldiers die in clashes with al-Sadr's supporters in Kufa.
- June 10, 2004: In yet another cease-fire infraction, Sadr's Mahdi Army seizes a Najaf police station, freeing prisoners and looting facilities.
- June 11, 2004: In a surprise move, al-Sadr endorses the Iraqi Interim Government and urges his followers to adhere to the negotiated cease-fire.

U.S. clashes with members of the Mahdi Army in southern Iraq also lasted until June, when al-Sadr nominally disbanded the militia and agreed to support the interim government. Unlike the fight against the Sunni insurgency, these battles seriously damaged the Mahdi Army and forced al-Sadr to stand down and end most active military resistance. They did, however, leave al-Sadr with substantial popular power. Tactical victory could not be translated into political victory or achieve lasting military effects.

ATTACK AND CASUALTY PATTERNS

The number of attacks counted by the Coalition included only attacks large enough to draw attention from intelligence sources and those that could be directly attributed to insurgents. Even so, they more than tripled from the first three months of 2004 till the end of June. This increase reflected the two offensives facing U.S. troops: the Sunni Arab insurgency in Al Anbar Province and Moqtada al-Sadr's militia in key southern and central cities. The following figures all show the rapid rate at which the insurgency was able to gain momentum and compromise U.S. efforts to establish security:

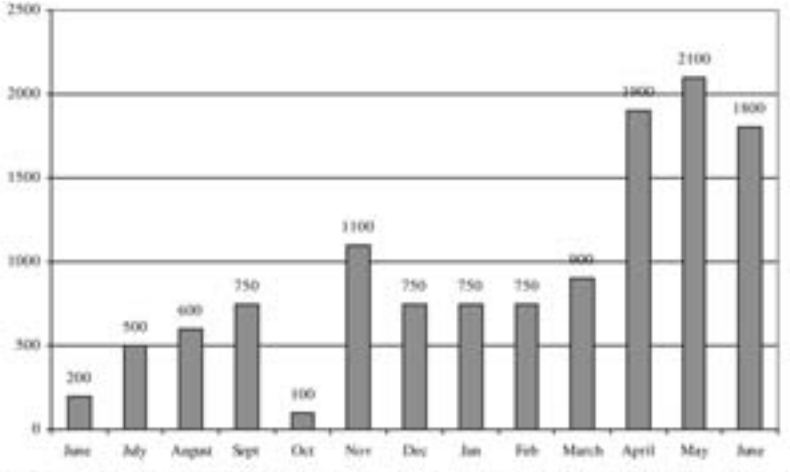
- Figures 4.8 and 4.9 show average weekly and monthly attacks in the first half of 2004. The number of attacks more than doubled between January–March 2004 and April–June 2004. This increase was a result of the fighting in Fallujah, with al-Sadr, and increased tensions leading up to the transfer of sovereignty. The number of attacks peaked at 2,100 in May.



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, October 13, 2005. Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD report.

Figure 4.8 Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January–June 2004

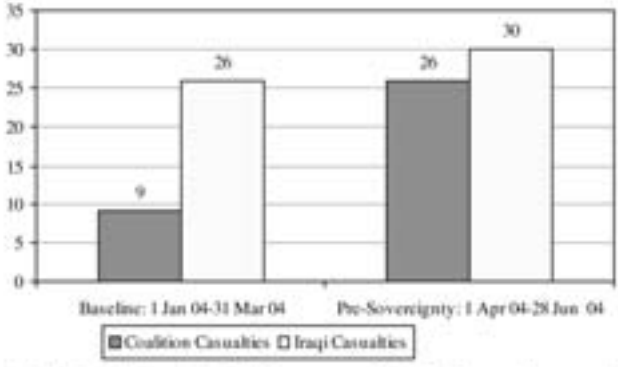
- Figure 4.10 shows average daily casualties for Coalition and Iraqi soldiers. Coalition casualties decreased in the first months of 2004 because Iraqi troops were singled out for attack, but they rose again by the spring. Rather than experience a decline, the average number of U.S. casualties per day had grown from 1.7 in 2003 to 2.3 in 2004.
- Figure 4.11 shows that average monthly attacks on infrastructure increased from January to June 2004. These attacks against infrastructure targeted fuel lines, electricity



Note: Includes approximate number of attacks on Coalition, Iraqi security forces, Iraqi government officials, civilians, and infrastructure.

Source: Adapted from the DIA and MNF-I data presented in Joseph A. Christoff, "Rebuilding Iraq: Preliminary Observations on Challenges in Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Military and Police," Government Accountability Office (GAO) GAO-05-431T, March 14, 2005, p. 10.

Figure 4.9 Approximate Number of Major Attacks per Month: June 2003–June 2004



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, October 13, 2005., p. 24.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD reports.

Note: The data are derived from unverified initial reports submitted by Coalition elements responding to an incident. These numbers should be used for comparative purposes only. The May and August reports noted that ISF were included in the totals for Iraqi casualties.

Figure 4.10 Average Daily Casualties—Iraqi and Coalition: January–June 2004

towers, water plants, and other key services that if lost, would turn public opinion against the Coalition occupation.

These graphs clearly show that the insurgency was not a group of Former Regime Elements, but a far more deadly combination led by neo-Salafi insurgents seeking to drive out the Coalition and incite civil conflicts. These trends led U.S. officials to be deeply worried about the surge of insurgent attacks on the planned day for the transfer of sovereignty, June 30, 2004. Insurgent attacks in June were averaging 60 a day, leading Bremer to request the secret early transfer date.

THE UNITED STATES, INSURGENCY, AND CIVIL CONFLICT IN THE SPRING OF 2004

A year into the "war after the war," far too many U.S. officials were still in a state of denial as to the realities in the Middle East. They did not see just how much the perceived U.S. tilt toward Israel alienated Iraqis and Arabs in general. They did not admit the near total failure of U.S. information operations nor the fact that Iraqis watched hostile Arab satellite TV stations and relied on papers filled with misinformation and conspiracy theories.

They talked about "success" in aid programs measured in terms of contracts signed, fiscal obligations, and gross measures of performance like megawatts; not about actual progress on the ground—the kind that could really win hearts and minds. They did not understand that U.S. calls for "liberty," "democracy," and

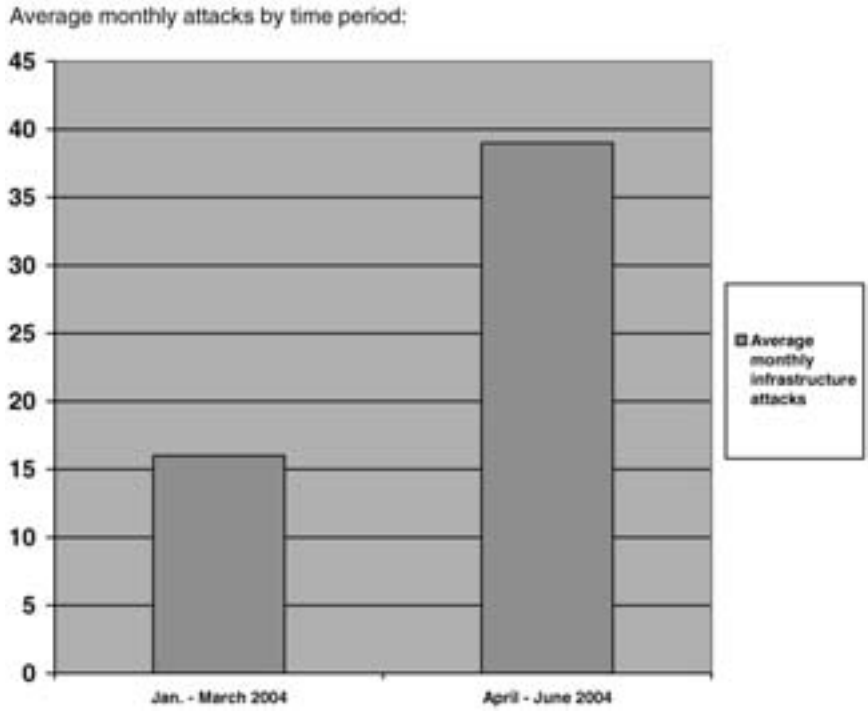


Figure 4.11 Average Monthly Attacks on Infrastructure by Political Developments

"reform" became coupled to images of U.S. interference in Arab regimes, the broad resentment of careless negative U.S. references to Islam and Arab culture, and conspiracy theories about control of Iraqi oil, "neoimperialism," and serving "Zionist" interests.

In late 2004, the United States had to accept that it was not possible to avoid some form of defeat, and this failure ultimately cost thousands more American and Iraqi lives. The United States was scarcely defeated in either a military or a political sense, but it was suffering serious reversals. The Iraqi insurgents did not have to win battles in a tactical sense; they merely had to put up a determined-enough resistance, with enough skill and courage, to show their fellow Iraqis and the Arab world that they were capable of a determined, strong, and well-organized effort. Many of their fellow Iraqis perceive any determined resistance as a "victory" against the world's only superpower.

The totals of U.S. troops, allied forces, and friendly Iraqis killed and wounded already reached the point where Iraqi insurgents and foreign extremists had every reason to perceive the Coalition as politically and strategically vulnerable—an image reinforced by the steady loss of support in U.S. and allied public opinion polls for the war and a continued effort in Iraq.

The resulting mix of Coalition and friendly Iraqi casualties, sabotage and paralysis of the aid process, and growing political uncertainty at the edge of the transfer of sovereignty acted as a virtual road map for future battles in Iraq and later battles against U.S. military and nation-building operations in the rest of the world. The end result was to show that an Arab asymmetric force could delay and possibly checkmate the strongest Western military power, that Arabs were not weak or passive, and that Arabs could "take back their homeland."

5

The Return of Iraqi Sovereignty and Shifts in the Nature of the Insurgency: June 29, 2004–January 29, 2005

June 28, 2004	The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) transfers sovereignty to Iraq. Ayad Allawi becomes the Interim Prime Minister. Soon after, Gen. George W. Casey, Jr. replaces Gen. Ricardo Sanchez as commander of Multi-National Forces–Iraq (MNF-I) and John D. Negroponte, formally the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, replaces L. Paul Bremer as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq.
July 28, 2004	In the deadliest single attack since the transfer of authority, roughly 70 people die when a suicide car bomb explodes in Baquba.
September 14, 2004	A car bomb kills 47 outside Army headquarters in Baghdad, where hundreds of recruits were lined up. An angry crowd gathers, cursing the United States and blaming American warplanes for the carnage. In another incident, 12 policemen are gunned down in a drive-by shooting in Baquba. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's group, Unity and Jihad, claims responsibility for both attacks.
October 23, 2004	Guerrillas dressed as police officers execute 49 newly trained Iraqi soldiers on a remote road in eastern Iraq. The unarmed soldiers are stopped at a fake checkpoint while returning home after completing training with U.S. forces. The incident supports assertions that insurgents have infiltrated the Iraqi security infrastructure. Two days later, Prime Minister Allawi blames Coalition forces for leaving the Iraqis vulnerable to attack.

November 8, 2004 U.S. troops move into Fallujah, engaging in intense fighting with insurgents for over a week. Most of the insurgents involved are either killed or captured. This fighting is often called the "Second Battle of Fallujah."

December 19, 2004 Car bombs in Najaf and Karbala, both holy Shi'ite cities, kill at least 60, making it the second deadliest day for Iraqi civilians since the United States transferred authority to the Iraqi government six months before.

January 21, 2005 At least 14 Iraqi civilians die and some 40 are wounded when a car bomb explodes outside a Shi'ite mosque in Baghdad. Later, an ambulance drives into a wedding party and explodes south of Baghdad, killing several.

The transfer of power from the CPA to the Iraqi Interim Government did more to intensify the insurgency and broaden the base of insurgent attacks than reduce tension or "legitimize" the appointed Iraqi government. The new Iraqi Interim Government, which had been selected by an Iraqi committee and the CPA, came to office downplaying the rising level of violence and claiming that 16 of Iraq's provinces were secure.

The reality was a growing insurgency. The Battle of Fallujah in November 2004 turned out to be a particularly striking example of a tactical victory that yielded little strategic results. The U.S. and Iraqi government offensive killed some 1,200 insurgents and led to the capture of nearly 2,000, at the cost of 54 American and 8 Iraqi lives. The offensive did clear a major insurgent safe haven, but vast numbers of Sunnis fled to other towns and the Coalition "hold" on the city was tenuous at best. It would be two years before security in Fallujah would reach the point where even minimal rebuilding could start.

The influence of neo-Salafi insurgents was rising significantly in the west, in Baghdad, and in the north. The number of attacks on Iraqis increased dramatically during this period. These extremist insurgents often attacked along sectarian lines, increasing pressure on the Shi'ites to engage in reprisal attacks and pushing Iraq's factions closer to civil war.

The number of violent incidents had declined somewhat after the Battle of Fallujah, but major insurgent attacks occurred in Baghdad, Mosul, Karbala, and Najaf. The Sunni triangle, the area along the Tigris River, and the "Triangle of Death" south of Baghdad were all areas of intensive Sunni insurgent activity, and the stability of Shi'ite and Kurdish areas remained uncertain. It was also clear that insurgents would increase attacks leading up to the January 30, 2005, election.

THE IRAQI INTERIM GOVERNMENT TAKES POWER

The CPA handed control of Iraq to the Iraqi Interim Government on June 28, 2004. The new leaders of Iraq were an assortment of men and women chosen by the CPA and Iraqi elites. The Interim Prime Minister was Ayad Allawi, a secular

Shi'ite on the Governing Council. The President, a mostly titular post, was Sunni Sheik Ghazi al-Yawer.

U.S. leadership also changed with the transfer of power. L. Paul Bremer, head of the CPA, left Iraq immediately after the transfer and was replaced by Ambassador John D. Negroponte. Gen Ricardo Sanchez, commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, also left in the early summer and was replaced by Gen. George W. Casey, Jr. Negroponte and General Casey both pledged to have a close working relationship between the political and military aspects of the U.S. presence.

When the CPA disbanded, it had left a series of fast-paced benchmarks for Iraqi political progress that were difficult to implement and put intense pressure on the new Iraqi government:

- November–December 2004: Parties and candidates emerge, party lists are made public, and platforms emerge; polling systems are defined.
- January 27–31, 2005 (January 30 election day): Elections take place for 275-person National Assembly.
- February–March: Iraqi Transitional Government takes power.
- August 15: National Assembly completes draft of permanent constitution.
- October 15: Referendum for permanent constitution.
- December 15: Elections for government completed—if constitutional referendum approves constitution.
- December 31: Elected government assumes office.

The schedule created four key risks that could derail the political process in the second half of 2004. First, it was far from clear that the Sunnis would participate in the election. The insurgency continued to wage an intimidation campaign against regular Sunnis, and many tribes actively resisted the Coalition presence. The Sunnis were not fully included in the early political process and saw little hope for a "unity" government led by the Shi'ites. The United States and the Iraqi Interim Government had to take several steps in order to ensure that Sunnis supported the new Iraq rather than the armed insurgency:

- Establish sufficient security and control to deny Sunni insurgents and terrorists any major sanctuary and "no-go" areas in Fallujah, Al Anbar Province, and Iraq generally. Not only defeat the insurgents who stay in Fallujah, but prevent their dispersal or their going under cover to the extent that they cannot control any major populated area, during daylight and at night.
- Ensure that Iraqi military and security forces demonstrate enough credibility so that they play a major role in the battle, can be the most visible security presence in the area after the major fighting is over, and can erase the impression of failure left by Iraqi forces in April 2004. Further, they should provide a credible picture to the Iraqi people, the region, and the world that government forces can—in time—take over a fully sovereign role from the U.S.–led Coalition forces and lead to the Coalition's withdrawal.

- Establish sufficient security in every high-threat area so that Iraqi security forces and administrators can function in Fallujah and key cities and towns in Al Anbar Province.
- Establish sufficient Iraqi Interim Government political control over Fallujah, Anbar, and the "Sunni triangle" to give the government a major boost in legitimacy and make polling and elections possible in the area.
- Give the Sunnis incentives to join the political and the electoral process. A significant number of Arab Sunnis must be persuaded to participate in the political process and January's election to avoid creating a Shiite- and Arab-Kurdish-dominated Iraq. The Sunnis controlled Iraq during Saddam Hussein's rule.
- Create conditions where there is immediate aid and compensation and longer-term economic hope. The military effort had to be accompanied by U.S. and Iraqi Interim Government efforts to institute an effective public-assistance and economic development process that offers jobs, hope, and incentives to join the interim government as a functioning and tolerated entity.

Any failure to implement most of the above key points in 2005 and 2006 almost ensured increased Sunni insurgent support for attacks against Iraqis, the Coalition, and the Shi'ite-led Iraqi government.

Second, it was unclear that the Shi'ites could remain unified enough to peacefully proceed with the elections. Moqtada al-Sadr had been tactically defeated and seemed to support the political process, but his Mahdi Army clearly had not disarmed. The Sadrists faction also clashed with members of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) in an intra-Shi'ite power struggle.

Third, the Kurds had been relatively pragmatic in making political demands thus far, but they were still concerned about several issues, including federalism and oil sharing. They had served a strong role in the political process and had supported the invasion. The final constitution, however, had yet to be written, and Kurdish demands were likely to increase in the interim.

Fourth, a totally inexperienced and unformed Iraqi political structure had to be rushed into being and then be thrust into almost immediate elections. As of late November 2004, the Iraqi Electoral Commission had approved some 156 political parties out of requests by a total of 212. As of that time, no party had had a chance to campaign or declare a clear program, and many were brand new.

These new parties and factions divided the Iraqi Interim Government. For example, the Iraqi National Accord Party led by Prime Minister Ayad Allawi was opposed by the new "Iraqi" Party of President Ghazi al-Yawer. The leading established parties included the Kurdistan Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Kurdish parties, three Shi'ite parties, and no Sunni parties.

The security situation throughout the country deteriorated in the last several months of 2004, and there was a growing debate whether to postpone the January 30 elections. The logistics of implementing the election seemed impossible in the security vacuum, and Prime Minister Allawi supported a delay, along with UN representative Lakhdar Brahimi. Shi'ite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani was, once again, one of the only voices supporting immediate elections. In

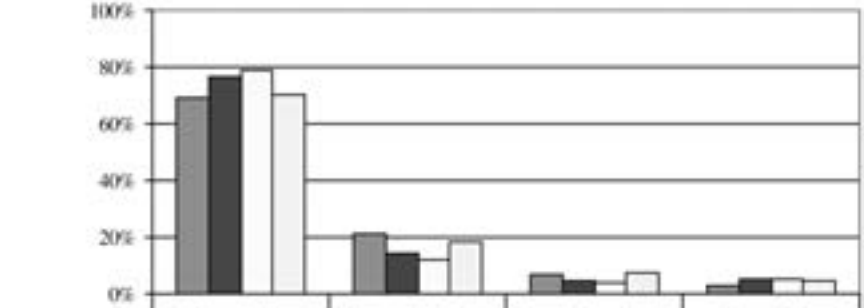
late November 2004, U.S. President George W. Bush decided to keep the election date.[1]

These developments made it even more difficult to work out a political process of power sharing at the top of the central government, and it would be years before the national lists and parties learned how to work together effectively and develop practical national political agendas.

These political challenges were further compounded by the failure to create effective local governance. Basic reforms were needed in the way the Iraqi Interim Government dealt with provincial and local governments, in creating effective provincial councils and local governments, in the role played by the United States and its Coalition allies, and in the role played by the UN. Creating an effective national consensus and government also required that this progress be made in parallel with the national political process.

Iraqi Public Opinion on Governance

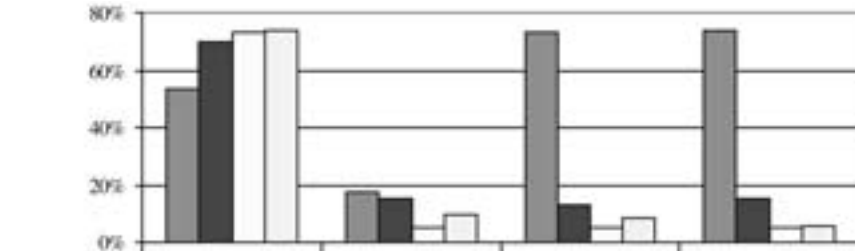
Iraqi public opinion did still support national unity, and most Iraqis felt that their country needed a single strong leader at the time of the transfer of power. An Oxford Research International poll in June 2004 found that 74 percent of Iraqis wanted a strong leader. This strong leader was supposed to be democractic; 70 percent supported democratic governance. The results from this poll and those before it are shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2.



	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Oct-Nov '03	69.30%	21%	7%	2.70%
Feb '04	76.30%	14.50%	4.30%	4.90%
Mar - Apr '04	78.60%	12.10%	4%	5.30%
Jun '04	70.10%	18.20%	7.30%	4.50%

Source: Oxford Research International, "National Survey of Iraq," June 2004.

Figure 5.1 Iraqi Support for Democracy



	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Oct-Nov '03	53.60%	17.60%	73.00%	74%
Feb '04	69.90%	15.40%	13.10%	15.40%
Mar-Apr '04	73.50%	4.90%	5%	4.80%
Jun '04	74%	9.80%	8.40%	5.80%

Source: Oxford Research International, "National Survey of Iraq," June 2004.

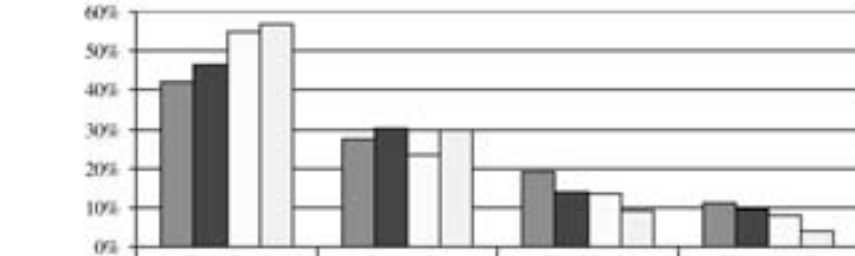
Figure 5.2 Iraqi Support for a Strong Leader

Religion and sect were, however, already major issues. According to a July 24–August 2, 2004, poll by the Independent Institute for Administration and Civil Society Studies (IIACSS) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), over two-thirds (68.7 percent) of Iraqis would prefer "religious" figures as candidates running for political office versus less than a quarter (23.8 percent) preferring "secular" candidates. Moreover, the June 2004 Oxford poll indicates that 57 percent of Iraqis had "a great deal" of confidence in their religious leaders. Another 30 percent put "quite a lot" of confidence in them. Meanwhile, nearly a quarter of Iraqis "strongly agree" that Iraq now needed "a government made up mostly of religious leaders," while nearly a third "somewhat agree." The results from this poll are shown in Figure 5.3.

Iraqis did not express a lot of confidence in Iraq's new national government. Only 15 percent had a "great deal of confidence" in Iraq's ministries and 33 percent "did not have much confidence." These results are shown in Figure 5.4. Iraqis' confidence in their government did surge immediately after the June 2004 handover, but fell again by the fall. This decline closely tracked the public's opinion of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, shown in Figure 5.5. As Figure 5.6 shows, most Iraqis did not have strong ties to political parties, and most did not trust them.

THE SPREADING AND ESCALATING SUNNI INSURGENCY

A further dramatic increase in the role of neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremist insurgents characterized the end of 2004. A number of such groups, several pledging allegiance to al-Zarqawi, emerged during the fall of 2004. There were also signs that the insurgents had penetrated Iraqi security forces.

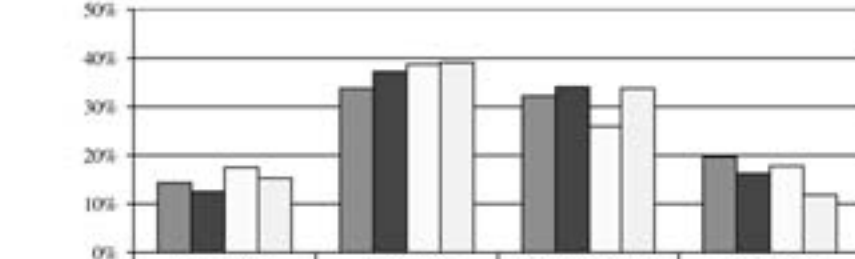


	Great Deal	Quite a lot	Not Much	None at All
Oct-Nov '03	42.20%	27.60%	19.20%	11%
Feb '04	46.40%	30.20%	13.80%	9.70%
Mar-Apr '04	55%	23.50%	13.70%	7.90%
Jun '04	57%	30%	9%	4%

Source: Oxford Research International, "National Survey of Iraq," June 2004.

Figure 5.3 Support for Religious Leaders

These Sunni insurgents repeatedly showed they could strike in ethnically mixed and Shi'ite-dominated cities like Baghdad and Basra, in spite of U.S. and Iraqi offensives. Between August and December 2004, between 40 and 60 towns were the scenes of insurgent attacks, and many lay outside the traditional insurgent areas. The most violent city in terms of number of major incidents was Baghdad, with 20–40 attacks a week. Mosul ranked next with 4–13 major attacks per week. Basra attack levels were relatively low, but peaked at 7 attacks per week. In one of the more deadly incidents, insurgents attacked a bus of unarmed Iraqi civilian contractors, killing 17.



	Great Deal	Quite a Lot	Not Very Much	None at All
Oct-Nov '03	14.50%	33.70%	32.20%	19.60%
Feb '04	12.50%	37.10%	34%	16.40%
Mar-Apr '04	17.50%	38.80%	25.90%	17.90%
Jun '04	15.20%	39.20%	33.60%	11.90%

Source: Oxford Research International, "National Survey of Iraq," June 2004.

Figure 5.4 Confidence in Iraq's Ministries

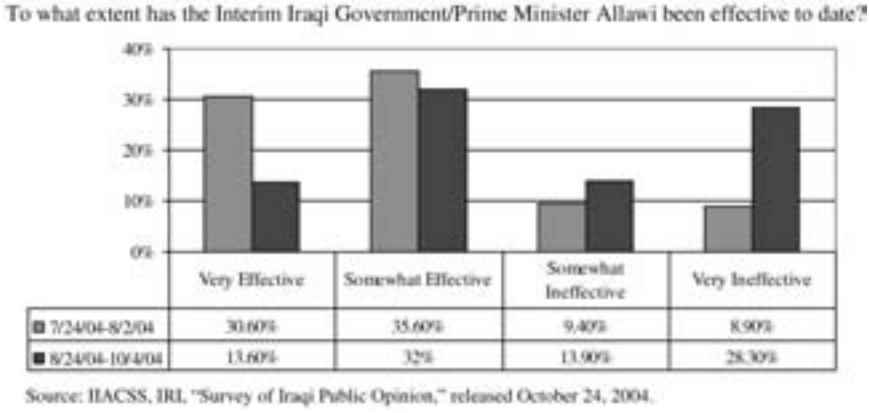


Figure 5.5 Iraqi Confidence in Interim Prime Minister Allawi

In Baghdad, insurgents struck the Green Zone two days in a row, killing almost 20 and wounding several dozen. On December 15, insurgents attempted to overrun two police stations in Mosul, but were repelled by Iraqi police and National Guards. One week later, insurgents mounted a second attack, this time on an Iraqi military outpost in Mosul. The security presence in Mosul remained fragile after 80 percent of the police forces abandoned their posts in November due to mounting security fears. The December 21 bombing of a U.S. military mess tent in Mosul, which killed at least 22 people, including 18 Americans, further demonstrated the reach of the insurgents during the winter of 2004.

The road from Baghdad to the international airport outside the city became a popular target for insurgents, and became a symbol of the Coalition and the Iraqi

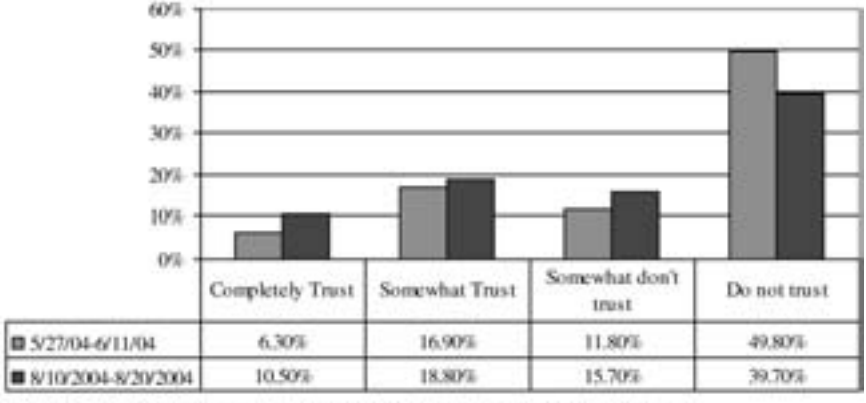


Figure 5.6 Iraqi Trust in Political Parties

government's problems in bringing security to Iraq in late 2004. Iraqis referred to the route as "Death Street" and "IED alley," while U.S. forces called it "Route Irish."[2] The continued violence in Sunni neighborhoods like Amariya, Hamra, Jihad, and Qaddisiya in Baghdad caused senior officials to use armored buses called "Rhinos" and helicopters when traveling in the area.[3]

As late as July 2004, some senior members of the Bush administration still grossly understated the seriousness of the insurgency in their public announcements, and the seriousness of the growing Iraqi hostility to the use of Coalition forces. Administration spokesmen still talked about a core insurgent force of only 5,000, when many Coalition experts on the ground in Iraq saw the core as comprised of at least 12,000–16,000. They also ignored signs of Sunni versus Shi'ite tension and growing ethnic tension in the north.

The insurgents made new efforts to attack both Iraqi political figures and Iraqi forces during the period before the January 30, 2005, election. There were many attacks on election candidates and officials and several hundred attempted and successful attacks during the campaign. In a typical attack on January 16, insurgents tried to assassinate Salama al-Khafaji, a candidate for the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). Al-Khafaji survived the attack, but many other attacks were successful.

The Second Battle for Fallujah

The first truly major battle between U.S. and insurgent forces, many of whom were discovered to be Islamists, took place during this period. In early November, U.S. and token Iraqi forces entered Fallujah in a major assault designed to rid the city of insurgents. The fighting was sometimes intense and led to the destruction of parts of the city. The insurgents took heavy casualties and were forced to flee the city, but found that Iraqi forces were not yet ready for serious fighting or capable of securing the city and the Iraqi government was not yet capable of establishing an effective presence or governance. The end result undercut much of the impact of the Coalition victory and exacerbated tensions between Sunnis and the Shi'ite-dominated government.

Unlike the First Battle of Fallujah in April 2004, this attack followed months of planning and troop strength triple that of the first attempt. The largely Marine force also accrued stockpiles of supplies so it would not get cut off if the insurgents peppered the roadways with improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The military made loudspeaker announcements asking civilians to leave the city, and only some 400 civilians remained at the time of the attack.[4]

On November 8 the troops moved into the city. The fighting was personal and intense; according to one Marine commander, most targets fired on were within 200 meters. They cleared the city block by block for ten days, killing at least 1,000 insurgents. U.S. troops suffered 54 dead and 425 wounded, and the Iraqis had 8 dead and 43 wounded, although some sources estimate that number to be much higher.[5] In the weeks that followed, U.S. forces uncovered two car-bomb factories,

24 bomb factories, and 455 weapons caches. The city was empty, and large parts were destroyed by the heavy fire.[6]

Fallujah was a significant tactical victory for the United States in 2004. The attack had killed large numbers of insurgents and taken away their primary safe haven. The city, however, was destroyed and devoid of basic necessities. Those who could not return to their homes were now displaced. Iraq was also awash with weapons caches and arms, and the stockpiles could easily be replaced. The United States would also learn that the insurgents could replace their ranks from the hundreds of thousands of young, unemployed Sunni men who were increasingly impacted by the Islamist element of the insurgency. Finally, the much smaller U.S. and Iraqi forces left to "hold" the city could not prevent the return of at least some insurgents and were unable to make much progress rebuilding Fallujah.

November was also the deadliest month for American troops since the invasion. Although 137 U.S. soldiers were killed, fewer than half of them were killed in the Fallujah attack, signaling insurgents were resuming their offensive on U.S. forces everywhere.

The Iraqi political debate over the Second Battle of Fallujah also had a far different outcome than several months earlier. In April, Sunni leaders had threatened to quit the political process if the United States attacked Fallujah. President Bush's plan relied on the transfer of sovereignty in June, and the military bowed to the Sunni political will. In November, however, it was clear that the limited Sunni members of the Iraqi Interim Government would not hold that much sway with Shi'ite interim Prime Minister Allawi.

Al-Zarqawi Ties to bin Laden and Outside Sunni Islamist Groups

Al-Zarqawi established formal ties to al-Qa'ida and Osama bin Laden during this period. As mentioned in the previous chapter, al-Zarqawi did not originally affiliate himself with bin Laden or al-Qa'ida. In October 2004, however, al-Zarqawi publicly pledged allegiance to bin Laden and changed the name of his organization from Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (Unity and Holy War) to al-Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers.[7] The statement read as follows:

> Talks, during which views were exchanged between Sheikh Abu Mus'ab . . . and brothers from Al-Qaeda, have been going on for eight months . . . Our respected brothers in Al-Qaeda understood the strategy of Jama'at Al-Tawhid was Al-Jihad in the land of the two rivers [Iraq] and the caliphates and their hearts opened to their approach. . . . We deliver to the nation the news that both Jama'at Al-Tawhid wa Al-Jihad's Amir [al-Zarqawi] and soldiers have pledged allegiance to the sheikh of the mujahedin, Osama bin Laden, and that they will follow his orders in jihad for the sake of God so there will be no more tumult or oppression, and justice and faith in God will prevail.[8]

Osama bin Laden also issued a statement in December 2004 confirming al-Zarqawi as the "Emir" of al-Qa'ida in Iraq. This linkage was part of a broader

process of Iraqi Sunni extremist affiliation with al-Qa'ida. Movements like the Army of Ansar al-Sunna, which claimed responsibility for an attack on a U.S. mess tent in Mosul in December 2004 and for many other suicide attacks, seem to have a mix of links to al-Qa'ida. Ansar seems to be largely Iraqi, but its mix of Sunnis and Kurds was uncertain, as was the extent to which the group and its cells were a direct legacy of Ansar al-Islam—an active Islamist group that reportedly provided sanctuary for al-Zarqawi before the war. In November 2004, Ansar al-Sunna said that it had twice collaborated with al-Zarqawi's group and another group known as the Islamic Army in Iraq.

Estimates of Insurgent Forces

Estimates of the size of the insurgency had varied widely since the struggle had first become serious in August 2003. Much depended on the definition of "insurgent" and the level of activity and dedication involved, and virtually every intelligence source that had such estimates made it clear that any figures for the total manning of insurgent forces were little more than "guesstimates."

The Coalition was slow to make such guesstimates realistic. U.S. officials kept repeating estimates of total insurgent strengths of 5,000 from roughly the fall of 2003 through the summer of 2004. In October, they raised their estimates to a range of 12,000 to 16,000, but never defined how many were hard-core and full time, and how many were part time.

In the spring of 2004, U.S. officials estimated that there might be a core strength of fewer than 1,000 foreign fighters in Iraq or as many as 2,000. A few press estimates went as high as 10,000 before the fighting in Fallujah, but that seemed to be sharply exaggerated. It seemed likely that the cadres of foreign volunteers in al-Qa'ida were under 500 men.

Iraqi Public Opinion on the Insurgency and Violence

Iraqi views of the threat were useful indicators of the status of the insurgency and civil tensions, and the direction in which the nation was heading. However, it was difficult to determine Iraqi attitudes and how they viewed the violence. There was no single Iraqi view of any major issue that affected Iraq. Iraqis disagreed on details regarding almost all of the issues covered in this analysis. Sometimes they presented very different views of how serious they took the threat from Syria and Iran, how and whether they quantified various threat forces, and how serious they saw given extremist, terrorist, and insurgent elements.

If one focuses on the Sunni insurgency, Iraqis saw the same four broad groups of insurgents as the United States:

- *Al-Zarqawi and Outside Islamist Extremist Organization Fighters:* Composed of mostly foreign Arabs from other countries. They could not be quantified, but their

numbers were small and probably well under 1,000. Their methods of attack had great impact.

- *Former Regime Elements:* Large numbers, and a mix of true supporters of the Ba'ath Party, alienated Sunnis, paid volunteers, temporary recruits, and other Iraqis. There was no way to quantify them, but some felt it was in the 15,000 to 30,000 range depending on how one estimates full-time and part-time fighters.
- *Iraqi Native Islamist Extremist Organization Fighters:* This group was small with numbers probably well under 500. Their methods of attack could mirror image outside extremists and have great impact.
- *Organized Crime:* The major source of violence and insecurity in at least 12 of the 18 governorates. Criminals often seem to cooperate with terrorists and insurgents. The seriousness and severity varies, but the numbers of criminals and their incidents were very high, as was their impact.

The polls conducted during the first year after the invasion generally did not ask questions about the insurgency. They did, however, provide a consistent warning about the lack of popularity of the war and the Coalition:

- The first poll conducted in Iraq in August 2003 by Zogby International revealed that just over 50 percent of Iraqis felt that the United States would "hurt" Iraq over the next five years and that a slightly higher number thought "democracy is a Western way of doing things and it will not work here." *Some 31.6 percent felt that Coalition forces should leave within six months, 34 percent said within one year, and 25 percent within two years.* In addition, just fewer than 60 percent felt that Iraq should determine its political future alone and without the help of the Coalition.[9]
- Some of these findings were substantiated by a poll conducted in May 2004 by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), ABC News, the German network ARD, and NHK in Japan. Among these findings, while more than half said that life was better a year ago under Saddam, "only 25 per cent expressed confidence in the US/UK occupation forces and 28 per cent in both Iraq's political parties and the CPA."[10]
- *USA Today*/CNN/Gallop polls published in April 2004 revealed further developments in Iraqi perceptions of U.S. policy, presence, and operations. *Among these was that "53 percent say they would feel less secure without the Coalition in Iraq, but 57 percent say the foreign troops should leave anyway," while 71 percent of the respondents identified Coalition troops as "occupiers."*[11]
- In an April 29, 2004, *USA Today* poll, many Iraqis considered American troops to be arrogant and insensitive:
  - 58 percent said [Coalition forces] soldiers conduct themselves badly or very badly;
  - 60 percent said the troops show disrespect for Iraqi people in searches of their homes, and 42 percent said U.S. forces have shown disrespect toward mosques;
  - 46 percent said the soldiers show a lack of respect for Iraqi women; and
  - 11 percent of Iraqis say Coalition forces are trying hard to restore basic services such as electricity and clean drinking water.

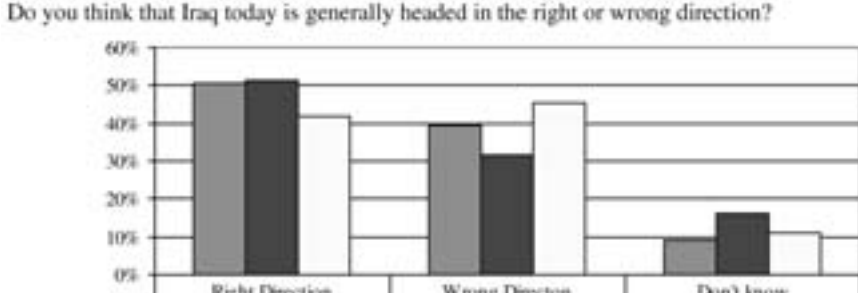
- U.S./Oxford polls showed 78 percent of Iraqis had no confidence in Coalition forces in October 2003 and 81 percent in June 2004—and this figure included the Kurds.

While such polls raised serious issues about the adequacy of the sample, methods, and the quality of the questions asked, their results were consistent enough to provide a clear warning that only an Iraqi government and Iraqi forces would be perceived as legitimate, and a Coalition occupation might well be a preface to civil war.

The IIACSS/IRI poll in the fall also found that over one-third of Iraqis polled felt that the country was not ready for elections in January 2005, and most already cited the declining security situation as the reason. The poll also found that optimism for the future was falling as attacks against Iraqis increased. These results are shown in Figure 5.7.

Despite the increased number of attacks and casualties, many directed against civilians, most Iraqis did not believe they were headed toward a civil war. In their September–October 2004 poll, IIACSS/IRI found that over two-thirds of Iraqis (68.8 percent) said it was "unlikely to happen." Only 14.8 percent said civil war was "always possible, but unlikely," and 7.8 percent said it was "likely to occur in the near-term."

IIACSS/IRI also asked Iraqis whether their households had been "directly affected by violence in terms of death, handicap, or significant monetary loss." Twenty-two percent said they had been affected, while 77.5 percent said they had not. Affirmative response rates ranged from a third (33.1 percent) in Sunni areas and Baghdad, to a quarter (26.6 percent) in Mosul and Kirkuk, a fifth in the south (18.9 percent) and the mid-Euphrates region (18.3 percent), and a tenth (10.5 percent) in Kurdish areas.



	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	Don't know
5/27/04-6/11/04	50.70%	39.30%	9.20%
8/10/04-8/20/04	51.30%	31.40%	16.10%
9/24/04-10/4/04	41.90%	45.30%	11.20%

Source: IIACSS, IRI, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," released October 24, 2004.

Figure 5.7 Iraqi Hopes for the Future

ATTACK AND CASUALTY PATTERNS: MORE ATTACKS ON IRAQIS

There are no reliable unclassified counts of insurgent attacks and incidents or of the casualties on both sides during the second half of 2004. The insurgents did, however, clearly step up their attacks on Iraqis. According to press leaks of classified reporting, there were roughly 1,750 insurgent attacks in June and July, 3,000 in August, 2,000 in September, and 2,500 in October.[12]

Some of the most notable attacks in the latter half of 2004 included the following:

- July 29, 2004: A suicide car bomb devastates a busy street in Baquba, killing 70 people.
- August 26, 2004: A mortar barrage slams into a mosque filled with Iraqis preparing to march on the embattled city of Najaf, killing 27 people and wounding 63.
- September 14, 2004: A car bomb rips through a busy market near a Baghdad police headquarters where Iraqis were waiting to apply for jobs, and gunmen open fire on a van carrying police home from work in Baquba, killing at least 59 people total and wounding at least 114.
- September 30, 2004: A series of bombs in Baghdad's al-Amel neighborhood kill 35 children and seven adults as U.S. troops hand out candy at a government ceremony to inaugurate a new sewage treatment plant.
- December 19, 2004: Car bombs tear through a Najaf funeral procession and Karbala's main bus station, killing at least 60 people and wounding more than 120 in the two Shi'ite holy cities.

The nongovernmental (NGO) Coordinating Committee on Iraq did make useful rough estimates of the patterns of attack between September 2003 and October 2004. These patterns seem broadly correct and illustrate both key patterns in the fighting and the need for competent and combat-capable Iraqi government military, security, and police forces:

- From September 2003 through October 2004, there was a rough balance among the three primary methods of attack, namely, IEDs, direct fire, and indirect fire, with a consistent but much smaller number of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). Numbers of attacks varied significantly by month. There was a slow decline from well over 400 attacks each by IEDs, direct fire weapons, and indirect fire weapons to around 300. There was, however, a slow increase in attacks using VBIEDs.
- Attack distribution varied, with a steadily rising number of attacks in the area of Mosul in the north. Baghdad, however, was the scene of roughly twice as many attacks and incidents as the other governorates, with 300–400 a month on average. Al Anbar, Salah-al-din, and Ninewah have had roughly one-third to one-half as many. Babil and Diyala average around 100 per month; lower levels of attacks have taken place in Tamin and Basra.
- Attacks fit a broad pattern during the day, although 60 percent of the attacks reported are unspecified. Of those that do have a specific time reported, 10 percent are in the morning, 11 percent are in the afternoon, and 19 percent are at night.

The following charts show the broadening scope of the war:

- Figure 5.8 shows how the war intensified from early 2004 to early 2005. As shown, insurgent attacks against Iraqi security forces increased dramatically during the final months of 2004. The insurgents began to focus on softer, easier Iraqi targets rather than well-trained and well-equipped U.S. forces after the January 30, 2004, elections.
- Figure 5.9 shows average attack patterns per month through early 2005.
- Figure 5.10 shows attack patterns by week.
- Figure 5.11 shows attack patterns for Coalition troops, Iraqi security forces, and Iraqi civilians.

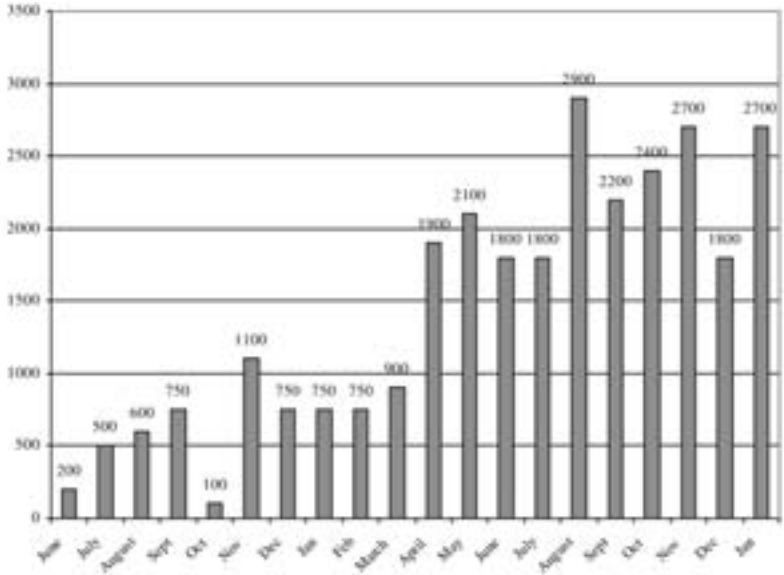
Coalition and Iraqi Casualties

In early fall, the Iraqi Health Ministry reported that nearly 3,200 Iraqi civilians had been killed since April. September and October 2004 proved to be particularly bloody months, with more than 34 car bomb attacks throughout the country—the highest monthly total since the U.S. invasion—occurring in September alone. Data from the Interior Ministry for the period between April 2004 and October 2004 show 3,853 civilians were killed and 15,517 were injured.[13]

Figure 5.8 Illustrative Patterns in Targeting and Casualties: September 2003–October 2004

Target	Number of Attacks/Incidents	Killed	Wounded
Coalition Forces	3,227	451	1,002
Coalition Air Convoy	49	55	32
CPA/U.S. Officials/ Green Zone	32	60	206
Diplomatic Mission	11	7	9
Local Authority	31	56	81
Contractor	113	210	203
Civilian	180	1,981	3,467
Criminal and Suspect	49	31	972
ICDC	58	191	310
Kurds Army	31	25	8
Police	209	480	1,012
UN	67	2	3
IO	1	2	0
NGOs	5	5	11
Journalists	8	27	38
Interpreters	7	17	6
Public Property	182	5	15
Unspecified	43	1	1

Source: MNF–I background brief.



Note: Includes approximate number of attacks on Coalition, Iraqi security forces, Iraqi government officials, civilians, and infrastructure.

Source: Adapted from the DIA and MNF-I data presented in Joseph A. Christoff, "Rebuilding Iraq: Preliminary Observations on Challenges in Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Military and Police," Government Accountability Office (GAO) GAO-05-431T, March 14, 2005, p. 10.

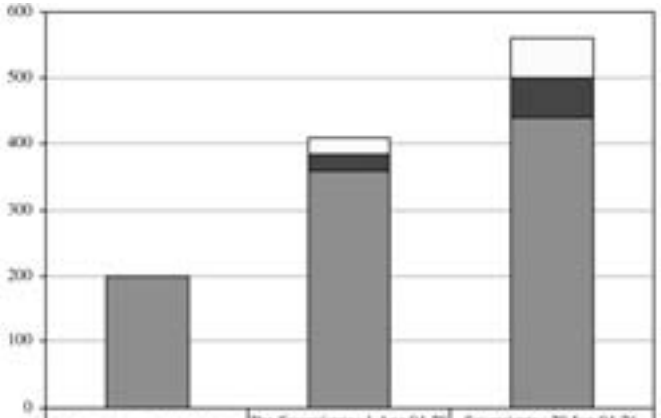
Figure 5.9 Approximate Number of Major Attacks per Month: June 2003–January 2005

In January 2005, the Health Ministry provided the BBC with the following statistics for the six-month period from July 2004 to January 2005:[14]

- 3,724 people in Iraq were killed and 12,657 were injured in conflict-related violence;
- 2,041 of these deaths were the result of military action, in which 8,542 people were injured;
- 1,233 deaths were the result of "terrorist" incidents.

These figures, based on records from Iraqi public hospitals, do not distinguish between the deaths of civilians or Iraqi security forces and may include insurgent casualties as well. U.K. Foreign Secretary Jack Straw described the Iraqi method of calculating casualties in October 2004:

> Every hospital reports daily the number of civilians (which may include insurgents) who have been killed or injured in terrorist incidents or as a result of military action. All casualties are likely to be taken to hospital in these circumstances except for some insurgents (who may fear arrest) and those with minor injuries.[15]



	Baseline: 1 Jan 04-31 Mar 04	Pre-Sovereignty: 1 Apr 04-28 Jun 04	Sovereignty: 29 Jun 04-26 Nov 04
Attacks targeting civilians	-	25	60
Attacks targeting Iraqi forces	-	25	60
Attacks targeting Coalition	197	360	440

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, October 13, 2005; Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD reports.

Note: The May and August 2006 documents did not include a "Baseline" period.

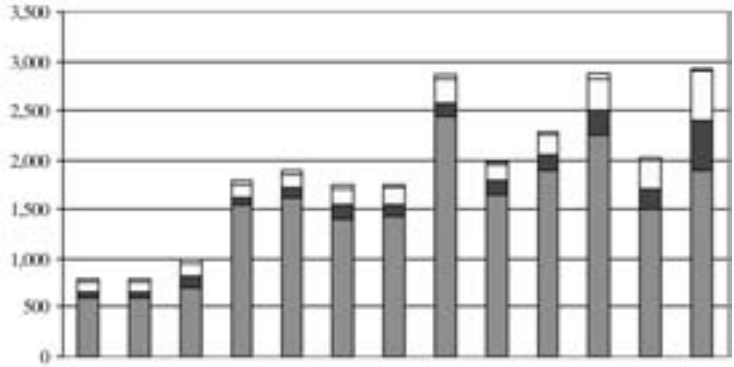
Source: Material adapted from "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Quarterly Report to Congress, Department of Defense, March 2007, pp. 19, available at: www.defenselink.mil.

*Note: Data points are estimates from a graph provide in the DoD report.

Figure 5.10 Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004–November 2004

Iraq Body Count (IBC), an independent group that compiles Iraqi casualty counts, released a study of Iraqi casualties since the Coalition invasion in conjunction with the Oxford Research Group in mid-2005. The study concluded[16] that approximately 25,000 Iraqi civilians were killed in 2003 and 2004 with about a third having been killed by Coalition troops. Although men over 18 accounted for the bulk of civilian deaths, the study found that women and children accounted for almost 20 percent of all deaths. Almost 80 percent of civilian deaths occurred in 12 cities. Baghdad accounted for almost half of the civilian deaths during this period. The study relied on casualty reports made available on 152 selected Web sites and did not try to verify the sites' sources. Some of the sites are relatively unknown and are of uncertain reliability. It also is not clear how strenuously the IBC has tried to sift military casualties from civilian casualties. Impinging the credibility of the IBC's figures further is the fact that it is an avowed antiwar group.[17] The results are shown below in Figure 5.12.

No record seems to have been kept of many cases of individual killings, disappearances, and kidnappings, and there is no clear basis for identifying who was responsible, whether insurgent action was involved, or if the attack was simply a revenge killing or crime. It was these attacks, however, that now did the most to disrupt the



	-Jan 04	-Feb 04	-Mar 04	-Apr 04	-May 04	-Jun 04	Jul-04	-Aug 04	-Sep 04	-Oct 04	-Nov 04	-Dec 04	-Jan 05
Other Targets	50	40	50	50	50	50	25	40	30	30	50	20	20
Iraqi Forces	100	110	125	125	125	150	175	250	150	200	325	300	500
Civilians	50	50	125	75	100	150	125	125	150	150	250	200	500
US and Allied Forces	600	600	700	1,550	1,625	1,400	1,425	2,450	1,650	1,900	2,250	1,500	1,900

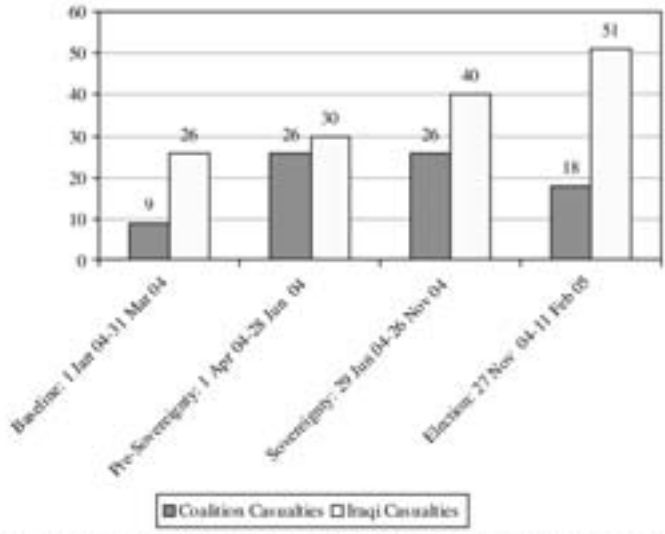
Note: Figures are rough estimates based on graphical data presented in the *New York Times*.

Source: "A Report Card on Iraqi Security," *New York Times*, April 11, 2005.

Figure 5.11 Insurgent Attacks by Key Target: January 2004–January 2005

normal lives of Iraqis and drive the country toward civil conflict. Ali A. Allawi describes this violence as follows:

> It was the unrelenting violence that affected the daily lives of urban dwellers. The killings were not all insurgency-related. In the early days after the war, the violence was directed mainly against former regime operatives and those suspected of being informants or accomplices. But the temp and scale of the violence changed with the rise of the insurgency. As it gained traction, assassinations and kidnappings began to affect the normal lives of citizens, and added to the increasingly unsettled and anxious world in which most people existed. The security forces, especially the police, were relentlessly and deliberately targeted—to drive home the point that anyone working with or for the Coalition was treasonous. Government employees became routine assassination targets, and, as the terror became more indiscriminate, all classes of workers for the government or the Coalition become fodder for the terrorists' bullets and bombs. Simple laborers, kitchen workers, factory hands, garbage collectors, teachers, were mowed down in a horrible campaign to frighten and intimidate often desperate people to abandon thought of government work. Later, workers in Iraq's small business sector would also feature in the terrorists' campaigns. The latter were targeted supposedly because the Wahhabist wing of the insurgency took exception to trimmed beards and fashionable haircuts, considering them to be an affront to their religious scruples. Kidnappings of civilians, for ransom as well as for terror-inducing purposes, surged in 2004. Bankers, businessmen, and even would-be parliamentarians were kidnapped and released only after the payment of large sums.[18]



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, October 13, 2005, p. 24.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD reports.

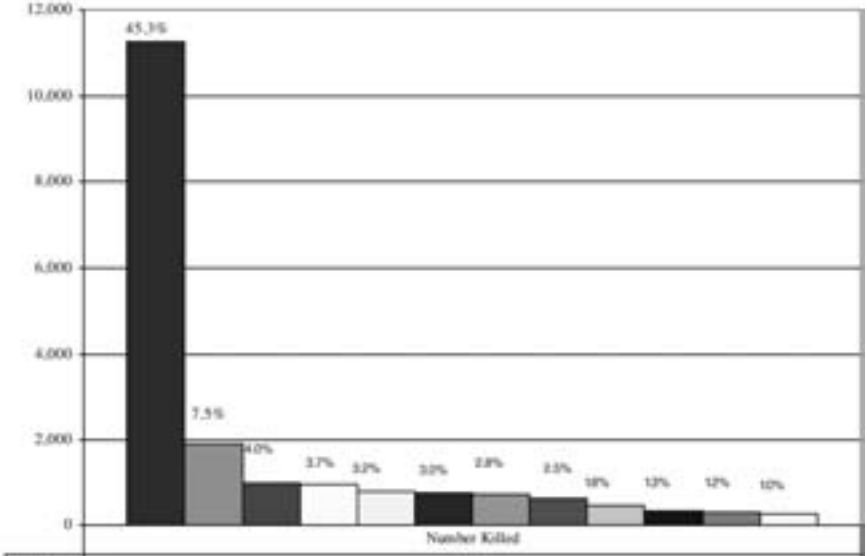
Note: The data are derived from unverified initial reports submitted by Coalition elements responding to an incident. These numbers should be used for comparative purposes only. The May and August reports noted that ISF were included in the totals for Iraqi casualties.

Figure 5.12 Average Daily Casualties—Iraqi and Coalition: January 2004–February 2005

The closest estimate of this violence was tracked by the Iraqi Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health reported in the spring of 2005 that some 5,158 Iraqis had died from all forms of criminal and insurgent activities during the last six months of 2004, but most experts felt such reporting might include only about half the real total. The Baghdad Central Morgue counted 8,035 deaths from unnatural causes in Baghdad alone in 2004, a major increase from 6,012 in 2003 and a figure that compared with 1,800 in 2002—the last year of Saddam Hussein. The morgue reported that 60 percent of those killed were killed by gunshot wounds and were unrelated to the insurgency. These deaths were largely a combination of crime, tribal vendettas, vengeance killings, and mercenary kidnappings.[19]

The insurgents also increased the number of kidnappings of foreigners in an attempt to get countries to withdraw from the Coalition. In a seven-week period in September and October, two Italian aid workers, a Japanese civilian, and the British-Iraqi director of CARE International, in addition to several American and British contractors, were kidnapped. Some were released; others were beheaded. Estimates of insurgent casualties are tenuous at best, and in all cases involving Iraqis the data that are available tend to focus on deaths and not wounded—particularly if the wounded did not require hospitalization.

At least 162 U.S. soldiers were killed in the three months immediately following the June 28 handover, more than the entire number killed during the invasion itself. Insurgents continued their attacks against Coalition forces into the fall of 2004, killing 81 U.S. soldiers in September and 65 in October. In August, more than 1,100 U.S. troops were injured, the highest monthly total since the start of the U.S.–led invasion. Another grim milestone was passed on September 7, 2004, when U.S. military fatalities reached 1,000. The United States lost 24 men and 60 were wounded in one attack on a mess tent in Mosul on December 21, 2004.[20] The U.S. death toll for December was 72. Some 68 Iraqis were killed in attacks in Karbala and Najaf a few days earlier, and 175 were wounded.[21] Figure 5.13 shows Iraqi and Coalition casualties during this period.



	Number Killed
Baghdad	11,264
Falluja	1,874
Nasiriya	984
Kerbala	929
Najaf	784
Mosul	735
Basra	704
Kirkuk	613
Hilla	456
Tikrit	312
Baquba	304
Samarra	256

Source: Material adapted from Iraq Body Count, available at www.ibc.org.

Figure 5.13 Iraqi Fatalities by City: 2003–Early 2005

THE GROWING ROLE OF THE SHI'ITES: THE RISE AND THE TEMPORARY FALL OF THE MAHDI ARMY

The fact the Mahdi Army had stood down, rather than been decisively defeated, became all too clear in the summer of 2004. After a relatively quiet period following the transition to the Iraqi Interim Government, Moqtada al-Sadr called on his followers in Iraq to rise up and attack U.S. forces on August 5, and subsequent fights broke out in three cities between his supporters and U.S. and Iraqi security forces, especially in Najaf and Sadr City in Baghdad. U.S. officials indicated that U.S. forces faced up to 160 attacks per week in Sadr City between August and September 2004 of varying severity.

The British Army also faced serious Mahdi uprisings in Basra and Maysan provinces in mid-August. A joint U.S.–British series of attacks in Maysan Province effectively ended the Mahdi Army's stronghold there, but most of the fighters fled to Basra. A report by Michael Knights and Ed Williams described this fighting in Basra as follows:

> Jaish al-Mahdi fighters seized the former Ba'ath Party headquarters and undertook operations against British bases and patrols. In comparison with the April uprisings, Sadrist forces were now much more experienced, resulting in an increase in so-called quality attacks, involving roadside bombs and mortar or rocket attacks. Sadrists also threatened to cut oil exports, attacking Southern Oil Company offices and menacing pipelines, partly to level political influence and partly to directly tap oil revenues at the source. In accordance with provincial government wishes to avoid widespread destruction such as befell Najaf, British forces ceded key areas of the city to the Sadrists through August. The limited British forces available instead sought to throw a "ring of steel" around the perimeter of the city to prevent any further influx of fighters and guarded key economic and political infrastructure. From early September, British forces began nibbling away at Sadrist enclaves, using similar tactics to those employed during the initial capture of Basra in April 2003. The effect culminated in the September 17 raid on the [Sadrist] offices in Basra, where fifteen tons of weaponry and ammunitions were recovered, causing an almost immediate cessation of resistance from the Jaish al-Mahdi.[22]

The defeat of al-Sadr's forces, and a series of political compromises, did, however, lead al-Sadr to turn away from armed struggle in the early winter of 2005. U.S. officials indicated that the number of attacks dropped significantly to between zero and five a week in early 2005. Once again, however, the tactical defeat of al-Sadr's militia in 2004 did not translate into a strategic or lasting victory for the United States, as later events would show. Instead, al-Sadr's populist movement gained increasing support as Sunni insurgents put more pressure on the Shi'ites to move toward civil war. Al-Sadr's anti-American rhetoric and subsequent political maneuvering would give him his own "undrainable swamp" of volunteers for the Mahdi Army.

TRAINING IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

The Department of Defense (DoD) began to provide more details in its background and press briefings on the development of Iraqi military and security forces

in July 2004. These new data provided information on the equipment effort for the first time, and they broke the manpower totals out into the new categories of Iraqi military and security forces created since the end of the CPA on June 30, 2004.

These same data confirmed long-standing problems in the effort to train and equip the Iraqi security forces and provided details on critical problems in the security program that had never before been made public.

One can argue the wisdom of the decision to disband the Iraqi military forces. The Iraqi military had largely disintegrated by mid-April 2003. Most of the regular forces dependent on conscripts had collapsed because of mass desertions; the heavier units in the regular army were largely ineffective and suffered from both desertions and massive looting. The Republican Guard and Special Republican Guard units had been defeated in the field and were too political to preserve.

The fact remained, however, that the U.S.–led Coalition could not be excused for its failure to reconstitute effective security forces and police, for trying to restrict the development of Iraqi armed forces to a token force to defend Iraq's borders against external aggression, or for ignoring the repeated warnings from U.S. military advisory teams about problems in the flow of equipment and in creating the necessary facilities. The United States failed to treat the Iraqis as partners in the counterinsurgency effort for nearly a year and did not attempt to seriously train and equip Iraqi forces for proactive security and the counterinsurgency mission until April 2004—nearly a year after the fall of Saddam Hussein and two-thirds of a year after a major insurgency problem began to emerge.

At the same time, the new data produced by the DoD in its background briefings and press briefings did have serious weaknesses. The DoD omitted critical details on the nature of the training Iraqis received for the first time and provided no data on the portion that actually went through academy and proper military training. The DoD provided less data on the flow of U.S. aid to the Iraqi Army and security forces and used unrealistic and outdated requirements and metrics for measuring how the equipment effort actually met Iraqi requirements.

The new figures also overstated the training levels for the police and for the Department of Border Enforcement (DBE) and ignored the fact that the facilities protection service training program was virtually no training at all. There was nothing unique about this tendency to issue exaggerated statistics by omitting meaningful categories and definitions, and using meaningless measures of success. From the start, the CPA was a model of obfuscation, omission, and false imagery in every aspect of its public status reports. For example, the more comprehensive training data on the Iraqi security forces issued by the CPA were deliberately confused by implying that training under the Ba'ath regime or limited on-the job-training was adequate.

The data that were available were scarcely reassuring. The penultimate status report the CPA issued before its disbandment shows that only 5,857 out of 88,039 Iraqi police had serious academy training, as of June 25, 2004, although another 2,387 were in the training pipeline. The final CPA report issued on July 6, 2004, did not provide the summary training data, but did indicate that a total of 3,411 students had graduated from the Jordanian Academy and 1,674 students had graduated

from the Baghdad Public Safety Academy. Even these students had courses lasting less than a fifth as long as similar training in the United States and Europe. The figures for the DBE showed that 255 had postwar academy training out of a total of 18,248, plus 25 in training. No figures were made available for how many police or DBE personnel could be said to have the necessary equipment, transportation, communications, and facilities.

No figures were provided for trained manpower in the new National Guard, although 2,362 out of 39,128 were said to be "in training." The same was true for the Iraqi Army. A total of 10,222 men were said to be in service, of which 2,316 were "in training." The data for the Facilities Protection Service showed an active strength of 74,069. Once again, no data were provided on what portion was regarded as trained, and only 77 were reported to be "in training." Training in urban warfare, providing reconnaissance assets, and other special equipment was only beginning, and the few meaningful details made public were not reassuring.

It was difficult to track the trends in Iraqi forces during the rest of 2004 or link them to developments in the insurgency; after September, the detailed data on Iraqi security forces had been cut out of official U.S. reporting. All breakouts had been eliminated from public U.S. reporting from the U.S. Embassy, the Department of Defense, and the Department of State. The only heading in the Weekly Status Report was now "Trained/On-Hand." None of the data released by the Coalition or U.S. government accurately reflected the numbers of men who actually reported for duty on any given day. These numbers were in reality often far lower than the total numbers of trained and equipped manpower cited by the Coalition and the DoD.

Useful data were, however, provided by the Coalition training command in Iraq, Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq (MNSTC–I), although such data could not go into the detail needed to distinguish between the total number of men trained and equipped, and what were sometimes much smaller numbers of men with fully adequate training and equipment for counterinsurgency and combat missions, or show the rapidly increasing size of the cadres of fully trained officers and noncommissioned officers. These data, which describe Iraqi forces as of November 18, 2004, are shown in Figure 5.14.

Warnings That Iraqi Forces Could Feed the Insurgency

There also were growing warnings some aspects of this effort to create Iraqi forces were feeding the insurgency and could continue to make things worse unless truly national forces were created that did not abuse Iraqi civilians or support sectarian and ethnic causes. The U.S. Department of State human rights report for 2004 noted that Iraqi forces had to operate in a climate of extraordinary violence and extremism on the part of their opponents and had to make protecting Iraqi civilians their primary mission. It also, however, sounded an important warning about the actions of Iraqi police, security, and National Guard through December 31, 2004:

> With the ongoing insurgency limiting access to information, a number of instances in the Report have been difficult to verify. However, there were reports of arbitrary

Figure 5.14 Iraqi Force Strength, November 2004

Force Element	Current Strength	On Duty, Trained, and Equipped	Total Authorized
Police	87,133	47,342	135,000
Special Police Commando Battalions	2,019	900	2,019
Border Enforcement	16,237	14,593	29,360
Highway Patrol	925	370	6,300
Bureau of Dignitary Protection	484	484	500
Intervention Force	6,584	1,816	6,859
Emergency Response Force	168	168	270
Civil Intervention force	1,091	1,091	3,720
National Guard*	43,318 (41,261)	41,409 ?	55,921 (61,904)
Special Operations Force	604	590	1,967
Army	16,634	4,507	27,000
Air Force	206	167	502
Coastal Defense Force	409	536	582
TOTAL	**173,903**	**115,882**	**275,708**
Military Forces	***(17,249)***	***(5,210)***	***(28,084)***

* Data from MNSTC-I are not clear. Data in parentheses are taken from the U.S. Embassy Weekly Status Report of November 3, 2004.

deprivation of life, torture, impunity, and poor prison conditions—particularly in pretrial detention facilities—and arbitrary arrest and detention. There remained unresolved problems relating to the large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Corruption at all levels of the Government remained a problem. Some aspects of the judicial system were dysfunctional, and there were reports that the judiciary was subject to external influence. The exercise of labor rights remained limited, largely due to violence, unemployment, and maladapted organizational structures and laws; however, with international assistance, some progress was underway at year's end.

. . .With the ongoing insurgency, there was a climate of extreme violence in which persons were killed for political and other reasons. There were occasional reports of killings particularly at the local level by the Government or its agents, which may have been politically motivated. In early December, Basrah police reported that officers in the Internal Affairs Unit were involved in the killings of 10 members of the Ba'ath Party. Basrah police also reported that the same Internal Affairs Unit officers were involved in the killings of a mother and daughter accused of engaging in prostitution. The Basrah Chief of Intelligence was removed from his position as a result of the accusations; however, he retained command of the Internal Affairs Unit. An MOI [Ministry of Interior] investigation into the Basrah allegations was ongoing at year's end. Other instances reflected arbitrary actions by government agents. For example, on October 16, Baghdad police arrested, interrogated, and killed 12 kidnappers of 3 police officers.

. . .The TAL [Transitional Administrative Law] expressly prohibits torture in all its forms under all circumstances, as well as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), during this reporting period, torture and ill treatment of detainees by police was commonplace. In interviews with 90 prisoners conducted from August to October, 72 reported that they had been tortured or mistreated. The abuses included some instances of beatings with cables and hosepipes, electric shocks to their earlobes and genitals, food and water deprivation, and overcrowding in standing room only cells.

Additionally, HRW reported that specialized agencies, including the Major Crimes Unit, Criminal Intelligence, Internal Affairs and possibly the Intelligence Service, were responsible for pretrial irregularities, such as arrest without warrant, lengthy periods of detention before referral to an investigative judge, and the denial of contact with family and legal counsel. Although detainees were primarily criminal suspects, they also included others, such as members of the Mahdi Militia and juveniles, who sometimes were caught in arrest sweeps.

There were instances of illegal treatment of detainees. For example, on November 1, Baghdad police arrested two Coalition Force citizen interpreters on charges involving the illegal use of small arms. After their arrest, police bound the detainees' arms behind them, pulling them upward with a rope and cutting off their circulation. This treatment was followed by beatings over a 48-hour period with a steel cable, in an effort to make the detainees confess. Both interpreters required medical treatment after their release to Coalition Forces. No further information on the incident was available at year's end. In another case, the Commission on Public Integrity (CPI) gathered enough evidence to prosecute police officers in Baghdad who were systematically raping and torturing female detainees. Two of the officers received prison sentences; four others were demoted and reassigned.

There were also allegations that local police sometimes used excessive force against both citizens and foreigners. On November 28, a foreign national reported that police beat him at a police station in Kufa. According to the victim, he witnessed police beating detainees at a police station while he was filing a claim on another matter. When he questioned the treatment of the detainees, he was beaten and detained for 4 hours.

A number of complaints about Iraqi National Guard (ING) abuses surfaced during the year. For example, in November, the ING raided a house in southern Baghdad and arrested four alleged insurgents. The family was evicted and the ING burnt the house. In another incident, a doctor at the al-Kindi hospital in Baghdad said that the ING had tried to force him to treat one of their colleagues before other more serious cases. When he refused, they beat him. There also were many reported instances of ING looting and burning houses in Fallujah in November.

According to an ING official, disciplinary procedures were in place to deal with the mistreatment of citizens and a number of members of the ING were fired during the year for violations.

There were numerous reports and direct evidence that insurgents employed multiple forms of torture and inhumane treatment against their victims . . .Although there was significant improvement in Iraqi Corrections Service (ICS) prison conditions following the fall of the former regime, in many instances the facilities did not meet international penal standards. According to the Government, it generally permitted visits

by independent human rights observers. In August, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited ICS facilities. The Ministry of Human Rights established a permanent office at the Abu Ghraib prison. HRW visited some ICS facilities.

After the fall of the former regime, prison functions were consolidated into the Ministry of Justice, and the ICS was transferred from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Justice. According to the Government, ICS confined civilians under the rule of law, and a valid confinement order from a judge was required. Confinement was not connected with military intelligence operations nor was there any contact with military confinement functions.

. . .Allegations of inmate abuse by ICS Officers continued, although fewer than in the previous year. The ICS Internal Affairs Division claimed it conducted investigations of all detected or reported cases and that appropriate corrective action was taken if an allegation was verified. Although fewer than 10 cases were investigated between July and December, an individual with access to human rights complaints alleged that hundreds of cases were pending accusing ICS officers of abuse and torture of detainees and prisoners, including women. No further information was available at year's end.

. . .At year's end, ICS was investigating eight cases in which inmates alleged police pre-detention abuse and torture. Overcrowding was a problem. Inmate disturbances and riots reduced available prison beds by approximately one-third, and pretrial detention facilities were often overcrowded. The insurrections in Sadr City and later in Najaf created additional overcrowding in detention facilities.

. . .Detainees were generally retained in custody pending the outcome of a criminal investigation. Individuals were generally arrested openly and warrants were issued only with sufficient evidence, although, there were numerous reports of arbitrary arrest and detention.

There were no publicized cases of criminal proceedings brought against members of the security forces in connection with alleged violations of these rights, nor were there publicly known measures adopted to prevent recurrence.

Due to the insurgency, high-crime rates, and limited police training, innocent persons were sometimes arrested and detained erroneously.

. . .The MOI's responsibilities extended only to internal security. MOI commands a number of uniformed forces, including the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) and Department of Border Enforcement. The MOI also has criminal and domestic intelligence capabilities and regulates all domestic and foreign private security companies operating in the country. The MOI also has authority over the Civil Defense Directorate, the firefighters and emergency response organization, and the Facilities Protection Service shielding strategic infrastructure, government buildings, and cultural and educational assets.

. . .In the aftermath of the fall of the former regime, a police presence temporarily vanished, except in the Kurdish North. Police equipment was stolen. After April 2003, a large recruitment and training program was established, including hiring former police officers.

During the year, various specialized units were created, including an Emergency Response Unit (with capabilities similar to a SWAT team) and Public Order Battalions that perform riot control functions, as well as specialized counterinsurgency units.

More than any other group, the police have been a target of terrorist attacks. Over 1,500 IPS personnel have been killed between April 2003 and year's end. Additionally,

pervasive lawlessness has led to an increase in violent and organized crime, particularly related to kidnappings.

. . . There was a widespread perception that police made false arrests to extort money. Some police officers did not present defendants to magistrates and held them in detention cells until their families paid bribes for their release. In the Central Criminal Court in Baghdad, the time between arrest and arraignment was often in excess of 30 days, despite the 24-hour requirement.

There were organized police abuses. For example, on September 4, approximately 150 police, none of whom had uniforms or badges, surrounded the Iraqi Institute of Peace (IIP), which is associated with the International Center for Reconciliation of the Coventry Cathedral, in response to an alert that a prominent former regime figure might be inside the Cathedral. Four individuals identified themselves as MOI officials, but did not show badges. Armed men, some with heavy weapons, broke down the doors and ransacked the IIP building, stealing phones and money. The incident ended with no serious injuries but without judicial follow-up.

On August 16, a ministry, reportedly wishing to occupy the real property used by a political party, caused party members to be arrested and detained for almost 60 days without charges. During their detention, a habeas corpus writ from the Chief Investigative Judge of the Central Criminal Court was ignored. The minister involved also refused to appear before the judge to explain his ministry's actions. The political party members were eventually released; however, the property involved remained under the control of the ministry at year's end.

. . . Reportedly, coerced confessions and interrogation continued to be the favored method of investigation by police. According to one government official, hundreds of cases were pending at year's end alleging torture. There have been several arrests, and both criminal and administrative punishments were handed out to police in cases where allegations of torture were substantiated.

Additionally, corruption continued to be a problem with the police. The CPI was investigating cases of police abuse involving unlawful arrests, beatings, and the theft of valuables from the homes of persons who were detained; however, the police often continued to use the methods employed by the previous regime. In addition to the CPI, several other mechanisms were put into place to address this problem, including an internal affairs capability, mentoring, and training programs that focus on accountability.

. . . Efforts to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the police were ongoing; however, there was little indication that the IIG [Iraqi Interim Government] took sufficient steps to address this problem adequately or to reinforce publicly the message that there will be no climate of impunity.

Because of arbitrary arrest and detention practices, some prisoners were held in incommunicado detention.

. . . Lengthy pretrial detention continued to be a significant problem due to backlogs in the judiciary and slow processing of criminal investigations. Approximately 3,000 inmates were in pretrial detention, and 1,000 were held post-trial.

. . . Corruption remained a problem in the criminal justice system. In the fall, the MOI referred allegations of misconduct involving a judge to the COJ [Council of Judges]. The allegations concerned professional misconduct; including bribery. At year's end, this case was still pending.[23]

THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE STATES: THE FIRST MENTIONS OF A "SHI'ITE CRESCENT"

Like Syria, Iran had now become a problem. Iran was playing at least some role in encouraging Iraq's sectarian political instability and took a role in trying to shape Iraq's political future. U.S. and British officials did not see this as a critical problem. Some Iraqi leaders, however, saw Iran as a serious threat. Outside Arab leaders, especially in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, expressed reservation over the rights of Iraqi Sunnis, Kurdish and Shi'ite dominance over the Iraqi government, and a new "strategic" Shi'ite alliance between Iran and Iraq.

Jordan's King Abdullah II claimed that more than 1 million Iranians moved into Iraq to influence the January 2005 Iraqi election. The Iranians, King Abdullah argued, had been trying to build pro-Iranian attitudes in Iraq by providing salaries to the unemployed. The king also said that Iran's Revolutionary Guards were helping the militant groups fighting the United States in Iraq and warned in an interview with the *Washington Post* of a "Shi'ite Crescent" forming among Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon:

> It is in Iran's vested interest to have an Islamic republic of Iraq.
>
> If Iraq goes Islamic republic, then, yes, we've opened ourselves to a whole set of new problems that will not be limited to the borders of Iraq. I'm looking at the glass half-full, and let's hope that's not the case. But strategic planners around the world have got to be aware that is a possibility.
>
> Even Saudi Arabia is not immune from this. It would be a major problem. And then that would propel the possibility of a Shi'ite-Sunni conflict even more, as you're taking it out of the borders of Iraq.[24]

Interim Iraqi President Ghazi al-Yawer, a Sunni and a pro-Saudi tribal leader, echoed the same sentiment.

> Unfortunately, time is proving, and the situation is proving, beyond any doubt that Iran has very obvious interference in our business—a lot of money, a lot of intelligence activities and almost interfering daily in business and many [provincial] governorates, especially in the southeast side of Iraq.[25]

Al-Yawer asserted that Iraq should not go in the direction of Iran in creating a religious-oriented government. He was quoted in a *Washington Post* interview as saying, "We cannot have a sectarian or religious government. . . We really will not accept a religious state in Iraq. We haven't seen a model that succeeded."[26]

Iranian officials and most Iraqi Shi'ites rejected these comments. Iran called King Abdullah's comment "an insult" to Iraq. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi also called on Ghazi al-Yawer to retract his statement and accused King Abdullah II and al-Yawer of wanting to influence the election against Iraqi Shi'ites. Asefi said,

> Unfortunately, some political currents in Iraq seek to tarnish the trend of election there and cause concern in the public opinion . . . We expect that Mr. al-Yawer takes the existing sensitive situation into consideration and avoids repeating such comments.[27]

Iraqi Shi'ites also reacted to King Abdullah's comment about the fear of a Shi'ite Crescent. Jordan's King Abdullah was asked by Shi'ites to apologize. The Najaf Theological Center issued a statement in which it accused the king of meddling in Iraq's internal affairs:[28]

> Distorting the truth and blatantly interfering in Iraqi affairs, provoking tribal sentiments in the region against Iraqi Shi'ites, provoking great powers against Iraqi Shi'ites, intimidating regional countries and accusing them of having links with Iran, displaying a great tendency for ensuring Israel's security and expressing worries about the victory of Shi'ites in the upcoming elections tantamount to insulting millions of people in Iran, who have been insulted just because they follow a religion that the Jordan's king is opposed . . .
>
> Najaf Theological Center is hopeful that the Jordanian monarch will apologize to the Shi'ites of the region and Iraq, and their religious authorities, because of the inaccurate remarks made against them.

Although no significant pan-Shi'ism movement yet existed, the invasion of Iraq had instigated a Shi'ite revival throughout the region. Most importantly, hundreds of thousands of Shi'ites from across the Arab world began making pilgrimages to holy sights in Najaf and Karbala. The unprecedented flow of Shi'ites in and out of Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime offered the opportunity for networks to arise that linked Shi'ites across the region. This network provoked King Abdullah's comment and "raised the specter for a broader struggle for power between [Sunnis and Shi'ites] that could threaten stability in the region."[29]

Iran certainly had active ties to several key Shi'ite political parties and their militias. These included elements in the Shi'ite-based UIA that emerged as Iraq's most important political coalition in the January and December 2005 elections: SCIRI, Al-Da'wa, and Al-Da'wa-Tanzim al-Iraq. The Revolutionary Guards and Iranian intelligence had been active in southern Iraq, as well as other areas, since the early 1980s. They almost certainly had a network of active agents in Iraq. There were also some indications that Lebanese Hezbollah has established a presence in Iraq.[30]

Prime Minister Allawi repeatedly expressed his concern over Iran's actions during 2004 and early 2005, as did other senior officials in the Iraqi Interim Government who saw Iran as a direct and immediate threat.

Iraqi Interim Defense Minister Hazem Sha'alan said in July 2004 that Iran remained his country's "first enemy," supporting "terrorism and bringing enemies into Iraq . . . I've seen clear interference in Iraqi issues by Iran . . . Iran interferes in order to kill democracy."[31] A few months later Sha'alan—a secular Shi'ite who is one of Iran's most outspoken critics in Iraq—added that the Iranians "are fighting us because we want to build freedom and democracy, and they want to build an Islamic dictatorship and have turbaned clerics to rule in Iraq."[32] Sha'alan made several points in a briefing on September 22, 2004:

- Iranian intervention and support of al-Sadr pose major threats, and some infiltration has taken place across the Syria border.
- Iran is behind al-Sadr. It uses Iranian pilgrims and sends arms, money, and drugs across the border.
- Iraq must have strong border defense forces. "If doors and windows are empty, no amount of cleaning will ever get rid of the dust."[33]

In a study of Iran's role in Iraq, the International Crisis Group noted that an Iranian cleric and close associate of Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani warned in November 2004 that

> Iran's policy in Iraq is 100 percent wrong. In trying to keep the Americans busy they have furthered the suffering of ordinary Iraqis . . . We are not asking them to help the Americans, but what they are doing is not in the interests of the Iraqi people; it is making things worse. We [Iranians] have lost the trust of the Iraqi people [*Mardom-e Aragh az dast dadeem*].[34]

In an interview aired on Iraqi TV on January 14, 2005, Muayed Al-Nasseri, commander of Saddam Hussein's "Army of Muhammad," said that his group regularly received arms and money from both Syria and Iran. "Many factions of the resistance are receiving aid from the neighboring countries," he said. "We got aid primarily from Iran."[35]

6

The January 30, 2005, Election and Growing Civil Conflict: January 30–December 14, 2005

January 30, 2005	Nationwide elections take place for a National Assembly that was tasked with writing a draft constitution. Most provinces also hold elections for provincial councils. The majority of Sunnis boycott the election. Violence steadily increases leading up to the elections.
February 18, 2005	A day before Ashura—the holiest day of the year for Shi'ites—insurgents kill 35 Iraqis: suicide bombers attack two Shi'ite mosques in Baghdad, killing at least 16 worshippers; a rocket targeting another Shi'ite mosque in Baghdad kills three; one police officer dies when a suicide bomber explodes at a Baghdad checkpoint.
March 3, 2005	The government of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'fari is sworn in. Al-Ja'fari is the leader of the Shi'ite Da'wa Party.
March 10, 2005	A suicide bomb explodes in a Shi'ite mosque in Mosul, killing 53 Iraqis attending a funeral for a Kurdish politician.
March 16, 2005	A suicide car bomber kills three Iraqi soldiers and wounds 12 more at an army checkpoint in Baquba. Iraq's first freely elected parliament in a half-century meets for the first time in Baghdad.
May 2005	A tape attributed to al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi effectively declares war against the Shi'ites in Iraq.
May 23, 2005	Insurgents detonate bombs at a Baghdad restaurant and a Shi'ite mosque, part of a series of attacks that kill at least 26 and wound 130. In the deadliest attack, a car bomb explodes

outside a northern Baghdad restaurant frequented by police, killing 8 people and wounding at least 80. Later, a suicide car bomber targets a Shi'ite mosque in Mahmoudiya, killing 7 people and wounding 23, many of them children.

June 21, 2005 Zalmay Khalilzad is sworn in as the new U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, replacing John D. Negroponte.

June 22, 2005 Two million Baghdad residents have been without drinking water since June 19 after saboteurs targeted a major water main in the capital.

July 1, 2005 Sheik Kamaleddin al-Ghuraifi, a senior aide to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, is gunned down in Baghdad on his way to Friday prayer. Immediately following the attack, a suicide car bomb explodes near the office of a major Shi'ite political party.

July 16, 2005 A suicide bomb detonates near a gasoline tanker in Musayyib, south of Baghdad, killing 98 and wounding 160.

July 19, 2005 Gunmen assassinate Shaykh Ahmad al-Juburi, the Imam at Al-Taqwa mosque in Al-Dawrah in southern Baghdad.

July 27, 2005 Prime Minister Ja'fari says he wants U.S. troops "on their way out." The top U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., announces that a withdrawal of U.S. troops could begin as early as Spring 2006.

August 3, 2005 In Haditha, an improvised explosive device (IED) strikes an amphibious assault vehicle, killing 14 U.S. Marines and a civilian interpreter. The attack is the deadliest roadside bombing against U.S. troops in Iraq since the war began.

August 17, 2005 Three car bombs kill at least 43 and wound 58 in Baghdad. Al-Zarqawi's al-Qa'ida organization claims responsibility.

August 22, 2005 Insurgents attack power stations in central Iraq, causing blackouts and costing the country $60 million in lost oil revenues.

September 14, 2005 A dozen bombings in nine hours rock Baghdad, killing more than 150 Iraqis and wounding several hundred. The deadliest attack occurs in the Khadamiya district, a Shi'ite neighborhood in northern Baghdad, when an insurgent detonates his van near a crowd of day laborers, killing 112 and wounding 200 more.

September 15, 2005 In a statement posted on a Web site, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi announces, "The al-Qaeda organization of Mesopotamia is declaring all-out war on the Rafidha [Shia]. . . in Iraq." The statement also claimed responsibility for the recent upsurge in violence in Baghdad. According to some estimates, al-Zarqawi's followers now number 16,000; of those, 6,700

	are considered to be "hard-core" Islamic fundamentalists. A further 4,000 members of the Jaysh Muhammad—an insurgent group loyal to Saddam's Ba'ath Party—recently joined forces with al-Zarqawi.
September 18, 2005	A final draft constitution is presented to the National Assembly and accepted, a month after the deadline of August 15.
September 25, 3005	The U.S. military states that insurgents loyal to al-Zarqawi have taken over several towns and are ordering Iraqi civilians to leave. The towns in question are Al Qaim, Dulaym al Husayba, Karabilha, Sada, and Al Ubaydi.
October 5, 2005	A suicide car bomb explodes outside the Husseiniyat Ibn al-Nama mosque in Hillah as Shi'ite worshippers gather to pray, killing at least 24 and wounding several dozen.
October 15, 2005	Iraqis vote in a "yes" or "no" referendum to accept the draft constitution. Sunnis overwhelmingly reject the draft, but it passes with Shi'ite and Kurdish support.
October 25, 2005	The U.S. military death toll in Iraq reaches 2,000. (It took 18 months for the death toll to reach 1,000, but less than 13 months to go from 1,000 to 2,000 fatalities.)
November 2, 2005	A minibus packed with explosives explodes outside a Shi'ite mosque in Musayyib, killing 21 and wounding more than 60.

The January 2005 election divided Iraq along ethnic and sectarian lines, further disempowered Arab Sunnis, and laid the groundwork for growing civil conflict. Sunnis did not participate, and Shi'ites and Kurds voted by sect and ethnicity. Coalition forces, backed by elements of Iraqi forces, were able to secure the country on election day, but only by pouring forces into the field and largely shutting down most movements along Iraqi roads and in Iraqi cities. As time went on, it also became steadily clearer that the election did more to divide the country along sectarian and ethnic lines and that Iraq was escalating into a more intense insurgency and civil conflict.

Some trends were mixed. A total of 673 U.S. troops were killed in 2005, versus 714 in 2004, and the number of wounded dropped from 7,990 to 5,639, a drop of 29 percent.[1] U.S. forces had fewer casualties, however, only because more Iraqi forces were in the field and there were no major urban battles like the Battle of Fallujah. U.S. casualties also fell because the insurgents shifted to Iraqi targets that were more vulnerable and had far more political impact at a point when it had become clear that the United States and its Coalition partners wanted to withdraw many of their forces.

As the numbers of Iraqi forces grew, they invariably became a more visible target for insurgents. In addition, while the United States became more adept at protecting its own forces from roadside attacks, many routine and vulnerable missions had been turned over to the Iraqi security forces (ISF).[2] Insurgents found that Iraqi forces were

easier targets and adjusted their tactics accordingly, recognizing that once the U.S. and Coalition forces leave Iraq, the primary enemy would be the Iraqi government. One Iraqi official described the new insurgent tactic in the following way: "In the past, they were targeting the American forces because they were in charge of security . . . After the new Iraqi army and police were established . . . they shifted their attacks."[3]

At the same time, the Sunni Arab insurgents struck successfully at many important political and economic targets. Al-Qa'ida and Ba'athist groups found oil facilities and pipelines to be particularly attractive targets because they denied the government revenue (in the first quarter of fiscal year 2005 Iraq lost an estimated $887 million in export revenues due to insurgent attacks on infrastructure),[4] affected both power and Iraqi ability to obtain fuel, got extensive media and foreign business attention, and prevented investment in one of Iraq's most attractive assets.[5] Further, attacks on power and water facilities both offset the impact of U.S. aid and caused Iraqi anger against the government.

The Sunni insurgents also continued to strike successfully at politically, religiously, and ethnically important Shi'ite and Kurdish targets with suicide and other large bombings. They carried out a large number of successful killings, assassinations, kidnappings, extortions, and expulsions. These included an increase in the number of successful attacks on Iraqi officials, Iraqi forces, and their families.[6] The insurgents also continued to intimidate their fellow Sunnis. There is no way to count or fully assess the pattern of such low-level attacks, or separate them from crime or Shi'ite reprisals, but no one doubts that they were a growing problem.

A SECTARIAN ELECTION

The January 30, 2005, election did little to create national unity. The majority of Sunnis, facing threats and intimidation from the insurgency, boycotted the election. Shi'ites and Kurds voted on sectarian lines. The election was rushed and did not give parties enough time to develop or campaign. Individual candidates and parties wishing to have a space on the ballot were required to submit petitions with 500 signatures to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) by December 15, 2004. Some individuals chose to run independently. All party slates were required to have a minimum of 12 candidates and a maximum of 275 candidates. In addition, at least every third name on party lists had to be that of a woman. The IECI adopted this provision in order to satisfy the goal set forth in the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) that at least 25 percent of the assembly should be female.

At the same time, the TAL qualifications excluded many potential candidates, including many potential Sunni leaders. Candidates could not be active members of the military and could not have been high-ranking Ba'ath Party officials. The TAL also disqualified anyone from candidacy who had worked for state agencies of repression, such as the former regime's secret service, gained personal wealth at the expense of public finances, or been convicted of crimes of moral turpitude.

An assessment of the candidates by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy produced the following results:

> For the Transitional National Assembly elections, the IECI has approved 111 lists representing more than 7,785 candidates competing for Assembly seats. Campaigning began on December 16 and ended January 23, 2005. Since December 15, however, forty-seven parties, most of them Sunni, have decided to boycott the elections. The following material covers the major lists and candidates:
>
> *The United Iraqi Coalition (UIC).* By far the most prominent list of candidates, the UIC primarily represents the Shiite majority and was completed in consultation with Grand Ayatollah Ali Hussein al-Sistani. The list consists of 228 candidates among sixteen parties made up of Arab Shiites, Arab Sunnis, Failis (Kurdish Shiites), Turkmen, and Yazdis (a small ethnic group living in the Kurdish-dominated north). Atop the list is Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The number two candidate is Ibrahim al-Jafari, Iraqi's interim vice president and head of the Da'wa Party. Other significant members of the Coalition include Ahmed Chalabi, head of the Iraqi National Congress Party (INC), who is number ten on the list of candidates. A notable exclusion from the alliance is Muqtada al-Sadr, who refused his support.
>
> *The Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP).* This Sunni party headed by Muhsin Abd al-Hamid, a former IGC member, submitted a list with 275 candidates. Though the IIP withdrew from the elections on December 27 after its repeated calls for the elections to be delayed were rejected, the party remains on the ballot due to electoral rules.
>
> *The Iraqi Party (al-Iraqiya).* This list was submitted on December 15 by the Iraqi National Accord Party, establishing the candidacy of party leader and interim prime minister Ayad Allawi. This coalition consists of other INA members, other political parties, as well as tribal figures and independents, and boasts 240 candidates.
>
> *The Kurdish Alliance.* This list consists of twelve parties and 165 candidates. The most prominent parties are the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), headed by Mas'oud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Party (PUK), headed by Jalal Talabani.
>
> *Independent Democratic Movement.* Headed by former Iraqi foreign minister Adnan Pachachi, this list contains sixty-three candidates, including Kurdish, Arab, Sunni, Shiite, Christian, Turkmen, and Sabean candidates. The list was originally bolstered by the support of several Iraqi ministers, but the minister of planning, Mahdi al-Hafidh, and Ayham al-Samera'i, minister of electricity, jumped ship to join the al-Iraqiyoon coalition. Pachachi has said he will participate in the elections but has called repeatedly for postponement. The People's Union. This list is made up of an independent candidate and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), the oldest communist party in the Arab world. The ICP, headed by Hamid Majid Moussa, submitted a list of 275 candidates, ninety-one of whom are women.
>
> *The Iraqis (al-Iraqiyoon).* Headed by interim president Ghazi al-Yawar, this party consists mostly of tribal leaders. Defense minister Hazim al-Sha'lan and the minister of industry, Hachim al-Hassani, are also supporters.
>
> *Constitutional Monarchy Movement.* Headed by Sherif Ali bin al-Hussein, claimant to the Hashemite throne in Iraq—out of power since 1958—this list has 275 candidates.
>
> *National Front for Iraq's Unity.* A 216-member list made up of Sunni political parties and tribes, this list is headed by Hassan Zeidan Khalaf al-Lahibi, who was arrested

by Coalition forces on December 31, prompting this party to boycott the elections on January 12.

Justice and Future Coalition. This is the Turkmen front, whose list is composed of 275 candidates and two parties.[7]

In many cases, however, voters had no real idea who was on the rest of the 100 entries on the ballot, what they stood for, or what many entries on the ballot meant. The requirement for woman candidates also complicated the problem of selecting proven or known candidates while enhancing human rights. Many of the women listed were totally unknown to many voters.

Seats in the assembly were won on the basis of proportional representation. Any candidate or party that received 1/275th of the vote had a seat. A party that received 20 percent of the votes would be assigned 20 percent of the seats, allowing it to send the top 55 people on its list to the assembly. Since the vote was nationwide for all parties and independents, some local votes were meaningless because they did not achieve critical mass in actually selecting candidates. Polls, however, raised real questions about how many Iraqis understood this.

Many Iraqis seemed to believe they were voting for a leader or president and not a party. In fact, the primary purpose of the assembly was to draft a new Iraqi constitution. This made proper representation of all factions critical to Iraq's future political process, but the method of voting favored the majority, which could be critical in ensuring that any faction that was not represented did not see the election as legitimate. This presented special problems when the Sunnis boycotted the election, and minorities like the Turkomans were left out.

The postelection deadlines were daunting. The assembly had until August 15, 2005, to propose a constitution. The proposed constitution would then be published and submitted to a general nationwide referendum no later than October 15, 2005. If the Iraqi voters approved the document, national elections based on the provisions of the new constitution would be held by December 15, 2005, and a new government would take office on December 31, 2005. There were few, if any, backup plans if this timeline failed.

Shaking Up Governance and Leadership Yet Again Before Either Had Functioned Effectively

There also was the issue of postelection governance. The assembly would serve as the national legislature during the transitional period and exercise oversight over the executive officials that it selected. The members would choose a president and two deputy presidents from their ranks to serve as heads of state. This three-member presidency council would have two weeks to choose a prime minister, and the prime minister would then have one month to form a council of ministers. The ministers would be subject to a vote of confidence from the assembly before assuming their posts.

The process of forming the new government took two to three months, leaving little time for the new National Assembly to draft a constitution. The United States

insisted that the timelines established in the TAL be maintained. Compromise and consensus failed, and Iraq divided further along sectarian lines. This fact, coupled with insurgent attacks against government targets, helped push the country toward low-level civil war.

The June 30, 2004, transfer of power created a political mess. New, inexperienced ministers still did not work well together, did not really know how to do their jobs, and/or did not have qualified subordinates who could work together within a given ministry. A new government would clearly face the same problems, and worsen the ones that already existed.

In short, an already somewhat dysfunctional and poorly organized central government—badly shaken up in June 2004, lacking effective ministerial governance in many areas, and where ministers and ministries often did not cooperate—was up for grabs by a whole new team midwar and during a factional crisis over the constitution.

The Regional Election Issue

In addition to the National Assembly election, most governorates also voted for a 41-seat governorate council, the exception being Baghdad with a 51-seat council; voters in the Kurdish region were electing a 111-seat Kurdistan National Assembly. In many areas, the central government was seen as lacking legitimacy and control. Local factions could emerge hostile to the central government and seek to block action or progress on the constitution to fight the result of national elections they resented. Moreover, the Sunni boycott meant that provincial councils composed of other ethnic groups and sects were elected in majority Sunni areas. Local Sunnis would now view the central government, their local government, and their local security forces as illegitimate. This fact would deepen sectarian tensions for years to come.

There was no accurate census data for Iraq, although many experts believed the Arab Sunni population was around 15–20 percent of Iraq's total population. Such estimates were, however, uncertain. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) placed Iraq's population at 26,074,906 as of July 2005. The CIA estimated in January 2006 that Iraq's population was 75–80 percent Arab, 15–20 percent Kurdish, and 5 percent Turkoman, Assyrian, or other. It estimated that the sectarian split in the entire population was 97 percent Muslim (Shi'a, 60–65 percent; Sunni, 32–37 percent), and 3 percent Christian. This estimate by Muslim sect, however, included the 20–25 percent of the population that was not Arab, and not just Arab Sunnis.[8] It was unclear if any accurate figure existed for the number and percentage of Sunni Arabs, although election registrations to date would put it close to the 20 percent figure. Figure 6.1 shows a rough estimate of the distribution of sects and ethnicities across Iraq's governates.

The Kurds did win about 60 percent of the seats in Tamim (Kirkuk) Province (26 out of 41 seats), strengthening their efforts to gain control of the province. The Kirkuk issue, however, was far from decided. The fast pace of constitutional drafting left

Figure 6.1 Ethnic Distribution and Political Boundaries

the issue ambiguous. Over the next three years, Kirkuk divided along sectarian and ethnic lines and became a regional center of the civil conflict.

Election Results

The Shi'ite Coalition, the United Iraqi Alliance (Coalition), led by Da'wa's Ibrahim al-Ja'fari, received the most votes in the election. The secular list, led by Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi received only 40 seats in the new government. The election results are shown in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2 Election Results, January 2005

Slate/Party	Seats, January 2005
United Iraqi Alliance (Shi'ite)	140
Kurdistan Alliance (PUK and KDP)	75
Iraqis List (secular, Allawi)	40
Iraqi Concord Front (Sunni)	–
Dialogue National Iraqi Front (Sunni)	–
Iraqis Party (Yawar, Sunni; was part of Iraqis List in Dec. vote)	5
Iraqi Turkomen Front (Turkoman, Kirkuk based)	3
National Independent and Elites (Jan)/Risalyun (Dec) (pro-Sadr)	3
People's Union (Communist, nonsectarian)	2
Kurdistan Islamic Group (Islamic Kurd)	2
Islamic Action (Shi'ite Islamist, Karbala)	2
National Democratic Alliance (secular)	1
Rafidain National List (Assyrian)	1
Liberation and Reconciliation Gathering (Sunni, secular)	1
Ummah Party (secular)	0
Yazidi List (Kurdish)	–

Source: Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Election, Constitution, and Government," CRS Report for Congress, December 22, 2006.

The creation of the National Assembly, however, was delayed by political posturing and sectarian demands. The United States urged the elected parties to nominate Sunnis for ministerial positions. Finally, the government of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'fari was sworn in on May 3, 2005. Key cabinet positions are shown in Figure 6.3.[9]

The Jaafari Government and Writing a Constitution

The chief job of the new government originally was supposed to be to write a draft constitution and prepare for full-scale popular elections based on the new constitution. However, the delay in creating the government heightened sectarian tensions and stalled this process. The 55 members of the Constitutional Committee were appointed on May 10, 2005, but its chairman and vice chairmen were not appointed until the end of the month. The Constitution Committee had only three months until the August 15, 2005, deadline set forth in the TAL to complete its work.

The sectarian composition of the Committee was Shi'ite and Kurdish. However, some Sunni leaders decided to take part in the constitutional process and sought inclusion in the new government, despite their boycott of the election. Shi'ite Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani also supported an inclusive effort. On July 5, 15 Sunni Arabs were added to the Committee. However, they voiced repeated complaints that they

Figure 6.3 Members of the Iraqi Cabinet as of May 8, 2005

Name	Position	Ethnic Affiliation
Jalal Talabani	President	Kurdish
Ibrahim al-Ja'fari	Prime Minister	Shi'ite
Ruz Nuri Shawis	Deputy Prime Minister (1)	Kurdish
Ahmed Chalabi	Deputy Prime Minister (2)	Shi'ite
Abid Mutlak al-Jubouri	Deputy Prime Minister (3)	Sunni
Saadoun al-Dulami	Defense Minister	Sunni
Baqir Solagh (aka Bayan Jabr)	Interior Minister	Shi'ite
Muhsin Shlash	Electricity Minister	Shi'ite
Abdul Mottalib Ali	Health Minister	Shi'ite
Sami al-Mudhaffar	Higher Education Minister	Shi'ite
Abdul Falah Hassan	Education Minister	Shi'ite
Ali Allawi	Finance Minister	Shi'ite
Jassim Jaafar	Construction and Housing Minister	Shi'ite
Ali al-Bahadil	Agriculture Minister	Shi'ite
Abdul Hussein Shandal	Justice Minister	Shi'ite
Ibrahim Bahr al-Uloum	Oil Minister	Shi'ite
Salam al-Maliki	Transport Minister	Shi'ite
Suhaila Jaafar*	Migration and Displacement Minister	Shi'ite
Abdul Karim al-Inizy	Minister of State for National Security Affairs	Shi'ite
Alaa Kadhim	Minister of State for Civil Community Affairs	Shi'ite
Hashim al-Hashimi	Minister of State for Tourism and Archaeology Affairs	Shi'ite
Safa al-Din al-Safi	Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs	Shi'ite
Osama al-Nujafi	Industry Minister	Sunni
Abdul Bassit Mawloud	Trade Minister	Sunni
Nouri Farhan al-Rawi	Culture Minister	Sunni
Azhar al-Sheikhli*	Minister of State for Women Affairs	Sunni
Saad al-Hardan	Minister of State for Provinces	Sunni
Narmin Othman*	(Temporary) Human Rights Minister	Sunni
Saadoun al-Dulami	Defense Minister	Sunni
Bassima Boutros*	Science and Technology Minister	Christian
Talib Aziz Zayni	Youth and Sports Minister	Turkoman
Barham Salih	Minister of Planning and Development Cooperation	Kurdish
Nisrin Barwari*	Minister of Municipalities and Public Works	Kurdish
Juwan Fouad Masum*	Telecommunications Minister	Kurdish
Abdul Latif Rashid	Minister of Water Resources	Kurdish
Narmin Othman*	Minister of Environment	Kurdish
Idris Hadi	Labor and Social Affairs Minister	Kurdish
Hoshyar Zebari	Foreign Minister	Kurdish

* Denotes female cabinet members.

were not included in the "backroom" negotiations in which much of the constitution writing took place.

On August 28, the Sunnis withdrew from the negotiations and the Shi'ite and Kurdish members of the Constitutional Committee presented the draft to the Transitional National Assembly without the Sunnis. Adding to the confusion, there appeared to be three "final" and different circulations of the draft. Finally, an actual final draft was submitted to the TNA on September 13 and accepted on September 18.[10]

An International Crisis Group report in September 2005 outlined the failures of a rushed draft constitution:

> Rushing the constitution produced two casualties. The first was consensus. Sunni Arabs felt increasingly marginalised from negotiations beginning in early August when these were moved from the Constitutional Committee to an informal forum of Shiite and Kurdish leaders, and have refused to sign on to the various drafts they were shown since that time. The text that has now been accepted by the Transitional National Assembly, in their view, threatens their existential interests by implicitly facilitating the country's dissolution, which would leave them landlocked and bereft of resources.
>
> The second casualty was the text itself. Key passages, such as those dealing with decentralisation and with the responsibility for the power of taxation, are both vague and ambiguous and so carry the seeds of future discord. Many vital areas are left for future legislation that will have less standing than the constitution, be more vulnerable to amendment and bear the sectarian imprint of the Shiite community given its likely dominance of future legislatures.[11]

The draft did not represent the views of the Sunni community and contained numerous ambiguities because it was written too quickly by an unrepresentative body. As with the election, the draft constitution-writing process only deepened sectarian tensions, further alienated the Sunni community, and gave the insurgency ample fuel for its fire.

The Referendum

On October 15, 2005, Iraqis voted in a "yes" or "no" referendum to accept or refuse the draft constitution. Not surprisingly, the draft passed with Shi'ite and Kurdish support, while the Sunnis voted overwhelmingly against it. The Sunnis now had to decide whether or not to participate in the upcoming December 15, 2005, election.

Polls in June 2005 showed deep divisions among Sunnis as to whether boycotting the January 30 elections had been a bad idea. For example, 83 percent in Baghdad thought it was a bad idea, but only 40 percent in Ramadi. In the months that followed, however, more and more Sunnis favored participation in the constitutional referendum, if only to try to block the constitution or amend it, and reassert Sunni power in Iraq. A poll in September 2005 showed that 84 percent of all Iraqis in the Baghdad area favored registering and voting while only 7 percent opposed. The

percentages were 75 percent favored and 5 percent opposed in the Mosul area and 78 percent favored and 7 percent opposed in the Tikrit/Baquba area. These percentages were not radically different in the Kurdish area: 79 percent favored and 6 percent opposed, and the Shi'ite areas in the south: 87 percent favored and 2 percent opposed.

The turnout for the referendum was good, particularly given the fact that serious problems existed in distributing ballots and/or knowing which voters should go to which polling places—especially in the less-secure Sunni areas. The turnout was 63–64 percent of registered voters versus 58 percent in the January 30, 2005, election. This reflected a major increase in Sunni voters since Shi'ite turnout in the south was lower than in January.

The Sunnis had no clear leader or group of leaders. The Sunni Arab vote did not reflect anything approaching a solid bloc, in part because of deep internal divisions in the Sunni community. One Sunni party, the Iraqi Islamic Bloc, did support the constitution—after obtaining some changes to the text and an agreement that it could be amended by the new parliament that would be elected on December 15. Some strongly opposed it, and hard-line insurgents opposed registering and voting.

The Sunni vote was strongly "anti" in purely Sunni areas—with "no" votes ranging around 85–95 percent (97 percent in al Anbar). It may have been more favorable in mixed areas. However, problems existed in the Sunni turnout in many areas, including Mosul and Ninewa Province because of insurgent threats—which may explain why 78 percent of the voters supported the constitution. Elsewhere in the country, voting was largely divided along ethnic and sectarian lines. Voting in the mixed province of Diyala, home to both Sunnis and Shi'ites, was illustrative of this split with 52 percent voting "yes" and 48 percent voting "no."[12]

The positive side of the vote was that many Sunnis had engaged politically, and not through violence. The level of Sunni engagement in the political process was even clearer in the run-up to the elections for the National Assembly. Even in Tikrit, there were more than two dozen political groups with offices by November, and young men could be found hanging campaign posters. Some posters even reached out to former members of Saddam's party. One such poster read, "Vote for us and we promise we will end de-Ba'athification."[13]

The negative side of the vote was that it clearly showed that the Sunnis were deeply divided, had no leaders with a strong popular following, and that voting did not mean opposition to violence. The largest Sunni party was the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). It had supported the constitutional referendum, but divided before the election. Another party, led by Adnan al-Dulaymi, was the General Conference of the People of Iraq (GCPI). This party and the Iraqi National Dialogue Council (NDC) agreed to merge with the IIP to form the Iraqi Accord Front. The NDC split further on the issue of the constitution and created a new party called the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue. The Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS) refused to participate on the grounds that multinational forces should first announce a timetable for withdrawal.

The key Sunni parties included two very different kinds of coalitions:

- **Iraqi Accord(ance) Front, Iraqi Consensus Front, or Tawafoq Iraqi Front**: This list, led by Adnan al-Dulaymi, had three predominantly Sunni parties and largely supported the constitution:
  - GCPI, led by Adnan al-Dulaymi;
  - IIP, led by Tariq al-Hashimi; and
  - NDC, led by Khalaf al-Ulayyan.
- **Iraqi Front for National Dialogue or Hewar National Iraqi Front:** Salih al-Mutlaq headed this list and split the Iraqi NDC because he opposed the constitution. The list includes the following political groups:
  - Christian Democratic Party, led by Minas al-Yusufi;
  - Arab Democratic Front, led by Fahran al-Sudayd;
  - National Front for a Free and United Iraq, led by Hasan Zaydan;
  - United Sons of Iraq Movement, led by Ali al-Suhayri; and
  - Iraqi National Front.

The divisions along ethnic and sectarian lines included the Kurds and other minorities as well as Arab Sunnis and were so deep that an agreement was reached shortly before the referendum that the permanent government elected in the upcoming December 15 election would have the ability to amend the constitution. The constitution in its current form was vague and contained ambiguities on key issues that had been passed along from the TAL; 50 out of 130 clauses were not completed before the referendum.

Some of these key issues included the following:

- Defining federalism, the relative power of the federal regions versus the national government, and demarcating any ethnic and sectarian zones with "fracture" lines in areas like Kirkuk, Basra, Mosul, etc.
- Allocating oil revenues for existing and future fields, and deciding on the future of oil development.
- Deciding who has the power to tax.
- Defining the power of the national government relative to provincial and local government.
- Deciding on the role of religion in the state.
- Deciding on the relative balance of religious and secular law and the power of national versus local courts and law enforcement.
- Deciding who really has power over the police, whether the security forces will become national, and whether the prohibition of militias will actually be enforced.
- Interpreting the meaning of the human rights provisions of the constitution.

THE INSURGENCY IN 2005

The Bush administration was slow to react and accept the fact that it faced a growing insurgency with diverse elements that would take years to defeat. It still, however,

tended to understate the level of the insurgent threat and the broader risks it posed and largely ignored the growing level of broader civil conflict. Administration reporting still characterized the insurgency as a small movement with little impact on national unity in the Department of Defense's October 2005 quarterly report to Congress on the stability and security of Iraq:

> The insurgency is primarily a Sunni Arab phenomenon and is not a national movement; it has a very narrow base in the country. It continues to be comprised of semi-autonomous and fully autonomous groups with a variety of motivations. Measuring the strength of the insurgency in terms of numbers alone does not provide an adequate assessment of insurgent capabilities.
>
> Insurgent numbers are a very small fraction of Iraq's population. The vast majority of these groups are connected in some way through members belonging to social networks (e.g., familial, tribal, and former professional) that stretch across Iraq and beyond. Insurgents can also be grouped into several strands: terrorists and foreign fighters, "rejectionists" (mostly Sunni), Saddam loyalists, and criminals.
>
> The main threat to achieving Iraqi control of and responsibility for security in provinces is, in the near and medium term, terrorists and foreign fighters because of the psychological impact on the population of their terror campaign, which appears to target Iraqi civilians indiscriminately.
>
> . . .One noteworthy strategic indicator of progress in the security environment is the continued inability of insurgents to derail the political process and timelines. This is a key objective they are failing to achieve. As expected, there has been an increase in the average number of insurgent attacks during the period leading to the constitutional referendum. Insurgent attacks remain concentrated in four of Iraq's eighteen provinces; half of the Iraqi population lives in areas that experience only six percent of all attacks. Six provinces reported a statistically insignificant number of attacks based on population size. Although about 80 percent of all attacks are directed against Coalition Forces, the Iraqi population suffers about 80 percent of all casualties.
>
> . . .Iraqi rejectionists maintain a steady level of violence that complicates efforts to stabilize Iraq. Criminal elements and corruption often enable the insurgency. As noted, these several strands of the insurgency have failed to derail the political process, and their efforts to foment ethno-sectarian conflict have not been successful due in large part to key Iraqi figures calling for restraint among their communities.
>
> Successful elections will not likely change the foreign fighters' strategy. The Iraqi rejectionists—particularly those who are Sunni—may, nonetheless, lose some of their support base as the political process advances. Saddam loyalists may present a longer-term threat to building a democratic, prosperous Iraq because they remain focused on creating conditions in which they can disrupt and subvert the government.
>
> Multi-National Force-Iraq operations in several of the areas most affected by the insurgency have combined with local commanders' engagement of local officials, tribes, and clerics. These operations have disrupted a number of key insurgent cells, limited their freedom of action, and maintained cooperation with influential local leaders in order to keep reconstruction and democracy building moving forward. A significant factor enabling progress against the insurgency is the dramatic increase in intelligence tips received from the population in the past several months, indicative of increasing popular rejection of the insurgents.

> . . . Insurgent groups continue . . . to demonstrate an ability to adapt, relocate, regenerate, and sustain a campaign of intimidation against Iraqi officials, professionals, "collaborators with the coalition," and religious figures.
>
> The insurgency remains concentrated in Baghdad, Nineveh, al-Anbar, and Salah ad Din provinces. In these areas, the insurgency sustains a level of violence and casualties that can produce effects that include: maintaining a non-permissive environment that undermines local governance, emerging institutions, reconstruction efforts, and economic growth; inhibiting foreign investment and diplomatic representation; limiting the roles of non-governmental organizations and contractors; and increasing the costs of reconstruction.[14]

This summary sharply downplayed the complexity of the Sunni insurgency, ignored the role of the Arab Shi'ites and Kurds in Iraq's growing sectarian conflict, and ignored the risk of a far more intense civil conflict. U.S. intelligence experts, however, were far less sanguine. Vice Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, summarized the state of the insurgency as follows in February 2005:

> The insurgency in Iraq has grown in size and complexity over the past year. Attacks numbered approximately 25 per day one year ago. Today, they average in the 60s. Insurgents have demonstrated their ability to increase attacks around key events such as the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) transfer of power, Ramadan, and the recent election. Attacks on Iraq's election day reached approximately 300, double the previous one-day's high of approximately 150 reached during last year's Ramadan,
>
> The pattern of attacks remains the same as last year. Approximately 80 percent of all attacks occur in Sunni dominated central Iraq. The Kurdish north and Shi'a south remain relatively calm. Coalition forces continue to be the primary targets. Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) officials are attacked to intimidate the Iraqi people and undermine control and legitimacy. Attacks against foreign nationals are intended to intimidate non-government organizations and contractors and inhibit reconstruction and recovery. Attacks against the country's infrastructure, especially electricity and the oil industry, are intended to stall economic recovery, increase popular discontent, and further undermine support for the IIG and Coalition.
>
> Recent polls show confidence in the Iraqi Interim Government remains high in Kurdish communities and low in Sunni areas. Large majorities across all groups opposed attacks on Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi and foreign civilians. Majorities of all groups placed great importance in the election. Sunni concern over election security likely explains the relatively poor showing by the Sunni electorate in comparison with the Shi'a and Kurdish groups. Confidence in Coalition Forces is low. Most Iraqis see them as occupiers and a major cause of the insurgency.
>
> We believe Sunni Arabs, dominated by Ba'athist and Former Regime Elements (FRE), compromise the core of the insurgency. Ba'athist/FRE and Sunni Arab networks are likely collaborating, providing funds and guidance across family, tribal, religious and peer group lines. Some coordination between Sunni and Shi'a groups is also likely.
>
> Militant Shi'a elements, including those associated with Moqtada al Sadr, have periodically fought the Coalition. Following the latest round of fighting last August and September, we judge Sadr's forces are re-arming, re-organizing and training. Sadr is keeping

his options open to either participate in the political process or employ his forces. Shi'a militants will remain a significant threat to the political process and fractures within the Shi'a community are a concern.

Jihadists, such as al-Qa'ida operative Abu Musab al Zarqawi, are responsible for many high-profile attacks. While Jihadist activity accounts for only a fraction of the overall violence, the strategic and symbolic nature of their attacks, combined with effective Information Operations, has a disproportionate impact.

Foreign fighters are a small component of the insurgency and comprise a very small percentage of all detainees. Syrian, Saudi, Egyptian, Jordanian and Iranian nationals make up the majority of foreign fighters. Fighters, arms and other supplies continue to enter Iraq from virtually all of its neighbors despite increased border security.

Insurgent groups will continue to use violence to attempt to protect Sunni Arab interests and regain dominance, provoke civil war, and/or serve the interests of Neo-Salafi Sunni extremism. Subversion and infiltration of emerging government institutions, security and intelligence services will be a major problem for the new government. Jihadists will continue to attack in Iraq in pursuit of their long-term goals. Challenges to reconstruction, economic development and employment will continue. The keys to success will remain improving security with an Iraqi lead, rebuilding the civil infrastructure and economy and creating a political process that all major ethnic and sectarian groups see as legitimate.[15]

A RISE IN VIOLENCE AND SECTARIANISM

At a time when the United States, the Coalition, and the Iraqi government should have been decisively reacting to growing conflict and risks, administration spokespersons and several senior U.S. officers stated that the insurgency was losing ground. This, in part, was the result of the fact the U.S. policy makers still focused more on the number of ex-Ba'athist leaders and insurgents it killed or captured at a time the insurgency was becoming steadily more Islamist extremist.

In making such claims, U.S. sources noted that prior to the January 30, 2005, election,[16]

- Some 40–60 towns and cities have been the scene of attacks each week since late August. Many are outside the "Sunni triangle" and Al Anbar Province.
- The most violent city in terms of number of major incidents has been Baghdad, with 20–40 attacks a week.
- Mosul is second with 4–13 major attacks per week.
- The level of attacks in Basra has been relatively low by comparison, but peaks of 7 attacks per week have occurred in Basra and its environs.

In contrast, they stated that after the election,

- Attacks against U.S. soldiers per day have fallen to between 40 and 50. U.S. officials state that this is approximately one-half the level of one year ago.
- Approximately one-half of the attacks that do occur cause no casualties or property damage.

By February 2005 it was all too clear that the violence had not abated. More than 130 Iraqis were killed in a seven-day period in early February. What was equally clear was that the insurgents had established a pattern of attacks designed to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines. The drive to push Iraq toward an intense and full-scale civil war was already under way and had actually begun in 2003, as shown in previous chapters. Large-scale attacks, almost all by Sunni insurgents seeking to destabilize the country by provoking civil war, included the following:

- February 8, 2005: A suicide bomber blows himself up in the middle of a crowd of Army recruits, killing 21 people.
- February 18, 2005: Two suicide bombers attack two mosques, leaving 28 people dead, while an explosion near a Shi'ite ceremony kills two other people.
- February 28, 2005: A suicide car bomber targets mostly Shi'ite police and National Guard recruits in Hillah, killing 125 and wounding more than 140. Some of the dead and injured are at a nearby market.
- March 10, 2005: A suicide bomber blows himself up at a Shi'ite mosque during a funeral in the northern city of Mosul, killing at least 47 people and wounding more than 100.
- April 24, 2005: Insurgents stage coordinated double bombings in Tikrit and a Shi'ite neighborhood in Baghdad, killing a total of 29 Iraqis and injuring 74.
- May 1, 2005: A car bomb obliterates a tent crowded with mourners for the funeral of a Kurdish official in the northern city of Tal Afar, killing 25 people and wounding more than 50.
- May 4, 2005: A bomb explodes among Iraqi civilians applying for police jobs in the Kurdish city of Irbil, killing 60 people and wounding some 150.
- July 16, 2005: A suicide bomber detonates explosives strapped to his body at a gas station near a Shi'ite mosque in the central city of Musayyib, blowing up a fuel tanker and killing at least 54 people and wounding at least 82.

Even so, the United States and the Coalition continued to make efforts to "spin" the course of the insurgency in a favorable way. On February 17, 2005, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told the Senate Committee on Armed Services that classified estimates on the size of the insurgency were not static, but rather "a moving target." Lt. Gen. John F. Sattler, the head of the United States Marine Corps (USMC) Expeditionary Force, said in March that insurgent attacks were averaging only 10 per day, with two producing significant casualties, versus 25 per day, with five producing significant casualties, before the Battle of Fallujah in November 2004.

The reality was that the Sunni Arab insurgency was provoking a growing level of sectarian and ethnic violence. It was true that it was driven by a relatively small part of Iraq's Sunni population concentrated in part of the country, and many of its most violent actions were led by a cadre of volunteers and extremists. This, however, was largely irrelevant as long as a violent minority could carry out attacks that divided the entire nation along sectarian and ethnic lines.

This was compounded by the fact that the new Iraqi government largely ignored the seriousness of growing sectarian tension and made largely cosmetic efforts to achieve national conciliation. Shi'ite and Kurdish leaders continued to press for their own advantage and the United States and the Coalition nations still dealt with the growing seriousness of the situation with something approaching denial.

As a result, much of the postelection optimism vanished as the spring went on. U.S. intelligence warned that the insurgency was actually growing more serious and that the risk of ethnic and sectarian violence was increasing. This shift was slow and sometimes self-contradictory. For example, Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., commander of Multi-National Force–Iraq (MNF-I), warned on several occasions that the insurgency would take years to fully defeat, but stated on March 9, 2005, that "the level of attacks, the level of violence has dropped off significantly since the [Iraqi] elections."[17]

General Casey stated that insurgents operating from the Sunni areas had enough manpower, weaponry, ammunition, and money to launch between 50 and 60 attacks a day.[18] Casey did, however, point to the arrest of several suspected terrorist leaders. Though the terrorists retained enough ammunition and arms to continue fighting for years, General Casey maintained that the capture of certain leaders had degraded the insurgents' abilities to fashion IEDs, the deadliest weapon confronting U.S. troops.

The U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard B. Myers, did claim that same week that the number of attacks had fallen to 40–50 per day, far fewer than before the elections, but roughly the same as in March 2004.[19] The Iraqi Interim Minister of Interior, Falah al-Naqib, made similar claims, as did Lt. Gen. Sir John Kiszely, then the British Commander in Iraq.[20]

Nevertheless, senior U.S. officers like Gen. John Abizaid gave more cautious briefings in May 2005 than officers had given in February and talked about years of combat.[21] Furthermore, while Gen. Richard Myers stated in late May that the levels of insurgent attacks had decreased, the United States simultaneously issued other data showing their lethality had increased.[22]

The insurgency continued to inflict severe damage on Iraq's population in the spring of 2005. On April 13, insurgents blew up a fuel tanker in Baghdad and, in a separate incident, attacked a U.S. convoy on the road to the Baghdad International Airport, killing five Iraqis and wounding four U.S. contractors. In Kirkuk, insurgents killed 12 policemen and 9 Iraqi soldiers; the latter were guarding Kirkuk's oil fields. Insurgents also detonated explosives targeting U.S. forces and Iraqi police in Mosul. As these attacks demonstrated, insurgents had begun to step up their attacks on fuel convoys and the oil infrastructure in the northern part of the country in an effort to disrupt life for everyday Iraqis.

Arab Sunni Islamist movements steadily increased their profile in terms of claimed attacks, media exposure, propaganda like tapes and CDs, and the use of the Internet and Web sites. The ongoing insurgent attacks and increasing sectarian and ethnic divisions delayed the government's formation for almost three months. It was not until April 28 that, under pressure from Washington, Shi'ite and Kurdish leaders

decided to submit an incomplete list of cabinet portfolios rather than delay the formation of a new government any longer.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the deadliest attacks of the insurgency gathered momentum during this period. Many were directed against sectarian and ethnic targets and followed by hard-line Sunni Islamist statements justifying the attacks and trying to exploit the attacks to further divide the country.[23]

THE GROWING IMPACT OF ABU MUSAB AL-ZARQAWI

The weakening of Sunni influence in the government helped continue the shift of the Sunni insurgency into the hands of the more extreme neo-Salafi movements. With the move came an increase in the number of sectarian attacks and civilian deaths.

Al-Zarqawi and the "War" against Shi'ites

This shift reflected a form of Islamic extremism that challenged the very status of Shi'ites as Muslims. Al-Zarqawi was scarcely the only Sunni Islamist extremist to denounce Shi'ites for betraying Iraq and fighting "dirty wars." The previous chapters have traced a broad pattern of attacks designed to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines and provoke a more intense civil war. Most Sunni Islamist groups, however, generally avoided open attacks on Shi'ites and other sects until 2006.

A tape attributed to al-Zarqawi in May 2005, however, was anything but reticent.[24] In the 74-minute tape, he explained why Muslim civilians were being killed in his attacks and justified the killing on the basis of research by Abu Abdullah al Muhajer. He reported that many operations were canceled because they were going to kill large numbers of Muslims, but mistakes were made and "we have no choice . . . it's impossible to fight the infidels without killing some Muslims." He stated that Muslims were killed in 9/11, and attacks in Riyadh, Nairobi, and Tanzania. He added that if these were considered illegitimate, then it would mean stopping jihad in every place.

Al-Zarqawi said that Iraq's geography made direct combat with the enemy difficult, and the only way around this was to intensify combat through suicide operations. He contrasted Iraqi terrain to Afghanistan's mountains and to Chechnya's woods, where it was easier for the "mujahedeen" to have a safe place to hide and plan after fighting with the enemy.

Al-Zarqawi's Growing Extremism

Al-Zarqawi stated that it was difficult for the mujahedeen to move in Iraq because of the checkpoints and the U.S. bases. Suicide operations were easier to carry out, more efficient, and could effectively force the enemy (U.S. forces and later, Shi'ite militias) to leave the cities for places where it would be easier to shoot them.

> These operations are our weapon . . . If we stop them jihad will be weaker . . . If the enemy gets full control of Baghdad it will implement its plan and control the whole nation. The

> whole world saw what they did in Abu Ghraib, Camp Bucca and prisons in Qut, Najaf and Karbala . . . that's when they did not have full control, so what would happen if they do?[25]

Al-Zarqawi said his group never attacked other sects in Iraq who are not considered Muslims, but fought the Shi'ites because they assisted the enemy and were traitors. According to al-Zarqawi, the Shi'ites only pretended they cared about civilian casualties. He also stated there was a plan to eliminate the Sunnis in Iraq, that Sunni mosques were being handed over to Shi'ites, and that Sunni clerics, teachers, doctors, and experts were being killed. He said that Sunni women were being kidnapped and that Shi'ite police participated in raping women at Abu Ghraib. These statements helped push the country toward civil war.[26]

He added that there were widespread abuses at Iraqi government-run prisons. These accusations included the prison in Qut, which he said was being run by Iranian intelligence, and a prison in Hilla run by a Shi'ite major general called Qays (evidently Maj. Gen. Qays Hamza, chief of al Hillah police), who "cuts Muslims' bodies and rapes women." He mentioned a specific story where Qays threatened to rape the wife of one of the fighters. He said his fighters unsuccessfully tried to kill Qays. In fact, there was a Web statement dated March 30 about a suicide bombing in Hilla that targeted Major General Qays.[27]

Another tape—attributed to al-Zarqawi—was aired on July 6, 2005. In this tape al-Zarqawi reaffirmed that targeting Iraqis was legitimate, and he dubbed the Iraqi security forces apostates. He called on Iraqi clerics who disapproved of targeting Iraqis to reconsider their views. He also asserted in the message that the United States went to war with Iraq in order to advance Israel's interests and referred to the conflict in Iraq as a "quagmire." He declared that the United States would invade the lands of Sham (Greater Syria) on the pretext of stopping insurgent infiltration and that this had not yet happened only due to the ferocity of the militant attacks. He also announced the creation of a new brigade charged with killing the members of the Failaq Brigade, a Shi'ite militia.

On September 14, 2005, al-Qa'ida in Iraq released still another audiotape by al-Zarqawi. On the tape, which surfaced on a day when insurgent attacks killed more than 150 people and wounded more than 500, al-Zarqawi declared "all out war" against Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq.[28]

In a letter released earlier in the day, the organization said the upsurge in violence was in response to the ongoing U.S. operation against insurgents in Tal Afar. Al-Zarqawi accused the U.S. military and the Shi'ites of using poisonous gas and raping women in Tal Afar and appealed to Iraqi sects to renounce the Jaafari government. Al-Zarqawi also threatened violence against Coalition troops and Iraqi government officials, calling on them to "come out of their lairs in the Green Zone."

Zarqawi's declaration began as follows:[29]

> Days go by, and events follow one after the other. The battles are many, and the names used are varied. But the goal is one: a Crusader-Rafidite [a derogatory term for Shia] war against the Sunnis . . .

> The interests of the Crusaders have converged with the desires of their brothers, the hate-filled Rafidites, and the outcome was these crimes and massacres against the Sunnis-from Al-Falluja to al-Madain, Al-Diyala, Al-Samarra, and Al-Mosul, through Al-Ramadi, Hit, Haditha, Al-Rawa, Al-Qaim and other places, and recently-but not last-at Tel'afar...
>
> This is an organized sectarian war, whose details were carefully planned against the will of those whose vision has been blinded and whose hearts have been hardened by Allah. Beware, oh Sunni scholars-has your sons' blood become so cheap in your eyes that you have sold it for a low price? Has the honor of your women become so trivial in your eyes? Beware. Have you not heard that many of your chaste and pure sisters from among the Sunnis of Tel'afar had their honor desecrated, their chastity slaughtered, and their wombs filled with the sperm of the Crusaders and of their brothers, the hate-filled Rafidites? Where is your religion? Moreover, where is your sense of honor, your zeal, and your manliness?

According to al-Zarqawi, the timing of the operation in Tal Afar had been planned to "cover up the scandal of Allah's enemy, U.S. President George W. Bush, in his dealing with what was left behind by one of Allah's soldiers—the devastating Hurricane Katrina."[30] Al-Zarqawi also said that U.S. forces numbering 4,000 and Iraqi forces numbering 6,000 converged on Tal Afar in order to do battle with a "small group of believers, which number no more than a few hundred."[31]

In the speech, al-Zarqawi singled out Iraqi government officials and members of the Iraqi security forces, as well as other "collaborators" for denunciation:

> Behold the Rafidites' lackey, [Iraqi Defense Minister] Sa'doon Al-Dulaimi, may Allah keep him miserable, bragging about their victories at Tel'afar. If only I knew what victory they are talking about-these cowards, none of whom dares to leave his lair unless he is shielded by the women of the Marines. Does this traitor believe that bombing houses, with women and children inside, constitutes a victory? By Allah, what a miserable victory...
>
> This lackey [Al-Dulaimi], who betrayed his religion and his nation, and agreed to serve as a tool of the Crusaders and Safavids threatens that he and his angels of destruction are advancing towards Al-Anbar, Al-Qaim, Rawatha and Samarra. To him we say that the mujahedeen have prepared for you and for your soldiers, by Allah's virtues, a slashing sword and lethal poison. Allah willing, you will be given to drink from the various goblets of death, and the lands of the Sunnis will contain your rotting corpses. Come, if you want, now or later.
>
> ...Whoever is proven to belong to the Pagan [National] Guard, to the police, or to the army, or whoever is proven to be a Crusader collaborator or spy-he shall be killed. Furthermore, his house shall either be destroyed or burned down, after the women and children are taken out of it. This is his reward for betraying his religion and his nation, so that he shall serve as a clear lesson and a preventive warning to others.
>
> ...Any tribe, party, or association that has been proven to collaborate with the Crusaders and their apostate lackeys-by God, we will target them just like we target the Crusaders, we will eradicate them and disperse them to the winds.[32]

Al-Zarqawi went further in ways that may have alienated as many Iraqis as they intimidated, producing a serious backlash among some of his supporters. His September 2005 statement ended with a declaration of "total war" against Iraq's Shi'ites:

> This is a call to all the Sunnis in Iraq: Awaken from your slumber, and arise from your apathy. You have slept for a long time. The wheels of the war to annihilate the Sunnis have not and will not halt. It will reach the homes of each and every one of you, unless Allah decides otherwise. If you do not join the mujahedeen to defend your religion and honor, by Allah, sorrow and regret will be your lot, but only after all is lost.
>
> Based on all that I have mentioned, and after the world has come to know the truth about this battle and the identity of its true target, the al-Qa'ida organization in the Land of the Two Rivers has decided: First, since the government of the descendant of Ibn Al-'Alqami and the servant of the Cross, Ibrahim Al-Ja'fari, has declared a total war against the Sunnis in Tel'afar, Ramadi, Al-Qaim, Samarra, and Al-Rawa, under the pretext of restoring rights and eliminating the terrorists, the organization has decided to declare a total war against the Rafidite Shi'ites throughout Iraq, wherever they may be.[33]

The Reaction in Iraq

Al-Zarqawi's extremism provoked a major reaction in Iraq. Immediately following the release of the statement, Shi'ite leaders and journalists called upon Iraqi Sunnis to condemn al-Zarqawi's declaration. One of them, Abdulhadi al-Darraji, a representative of Moqtada al-Sadr, insisted that the Sunni Muslim Clerics Association "issue a fatwa (religious edict) forbidding Muslims from joining these groups that deem others infidels."[34]

Sunni responses to al-Zarqawi's declaration of war against the Shia were mixed, but largely negative. Some leaders did accept Darraji's call for a Sunni rejection of al-Zarqawi. The AMS in Iraq called on al-Zarqawi to renounce violence against Shi'ites and Sunnis in Iraq who were involved in the political process, saying, "Al-Zarqawi must retract his threats because they hurt jihad and would cause the shedding of the blood of more innocent Iraqis."[35] The Muslim Clerics Association also urged al-Zarqawi to retract his statement. A gathering of members of the Salafi Higher Committee for Da'wah, Guidance, and Fatwa, who rejected al-Zarqawi's declaration as "unacceptable," said the spilling of Muslim blood was religiously forbidden—statements that might have had more credibility if they had not continued to spill so much of it.[36]

Al-Zarqawi reacted to these calls by retracting part of his earlier statement. On September 19, 2005, he issued another statement as a follow-up to his declaration of war, saying, "It has become known to our group that some sects, such as the Sadr group. . . and others, have not taken part in the massacres and not helped the occupier. . . . So we have decided not to hurt these groups in any way, as long as they do not strike us."[37]

But al-Zarqawi accused six Shi'ite and Kurdish groups (Al-Da'wa Party, The Higher Revolutionary Party, National Conference Party, Al-Wifaq Party, Kurdistan Democratic Party, and Kurdistan United National Party) of helping the U.S.

occupation forces and said attacks against them would continue.[38] After al-Sadr changed his tactics and decided to join the political process in late 2005, al-Zarqawi again authorized attacks against al-Sadr's followers.

"Overkill" against Fellow Muslims and the "Iraqization" of al-Qa'ida

Al-Zarqawi's overt sectarianism led some analysts to believe that Osama bin Laden made a strategic error by declaring al-Zarqawi the "emir" for operations in Iraq. Iraqis were deeply distrusting of outsiders and, in particular, neighbors in the region. Bin Laden's declaration could be seen by Iraqis in highly nationalistic terms as a Saudi ordering a Jordanian to kill Iraqis. These analysts believed that this would motivate those Iraqis who were previously weary of the political process to offer their support to the elected government.

Al-Zarqawi made occasional efforts to remake his organization's reputation to reduce tensions with Iraqi Sunnis. Al-Qa'ida Web site pronouncements stated that the group had tried to avoid Muslim casualties with the notable exception being the Iraq military and security forces. They quickly initially denounced attacks on civilians like the massive suicide car bombing in Hilla in March 2005.[39] There was evidence, however, that al-Qa'ida attacked Sunnis involved in the political process after the elections in 2005.

In the summer of 2005, a statement allegedly written by al-Zarqawi revealed a strained relationship with the militant Islamist preacher (and former cellmate of al-Zarqawi) Islam Mohammed al-Barqawi. Al-Zarqawi had long been identified with al-Barqawi, also known as Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi, and often referred to him as his "sheik" and spiritual guide.[40]

In an interview with al-Jazeera television in July, al-Barqawi admonished al-Zarqawi, saying suicide bombings in Iraq resulted in the deaths of too many Iraqis and that the militants should not target Shi'ite Muslims.[41] Al-Zarqawi's statement was a direct response to al-Barqawi's interview. In it, he questioned al-Barqawi's statements and implored the preacher to not "turn against the Mujahedeen."[42]

This posting confirmed what al-Zarqawi's letter to bin Laden suggested: that the support al-Zarqawi expected to come forth in Iraq and the Middle East had yet to materialize on the scale he envisioned. Moreover, the posting against al-Barqawi and the partial retraction of the declaration of war against Shi'ites suggested that al-Qa'ida in Iraq's leadership was sensitive to Muslim public opinion.

The Zawahiri Response

Further evidence of al-Zarqawi's controversial extremism appeared in October 2005 when the U.S. government published a letter purported to be from Ayman Al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi. In the letter, dated July 9, 2005, Al-Zawahiri asks for news from Iraq and urges al-Zarqawi's organization to think about its long-term strategic objectives. Calling the struggle in Iraq "the place for the greatest battle of Islam in this era," Al-Zawahiri wrote,

[W]e must think for a long time about our next steps and how we want to attain it, and it is my humble opinion that the Jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals:

The first stage: Expel the Americans from Iraq.

The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority or emirate, then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of a caliphate-over as much territory as you can to spread its power in Iraq, i.e. in Sunni areas, is in order to fill the void stemming from the departure of the Americans, immediately upon their exit and before un-Islamic forces attempt to fill this void, whether those whom the Americans will leave behind them, or those among the un-Islamic forces who will try to jump at taking power...

The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq.

The fourth stage: It may coincide with what came before: the clash with Israel, because Israel was established only to challenge any new Islamic entity.[43]

Having outlined the four stages of the conflict, Al-Zawahiri addressed the group's level of popular support. Al-Zawahiri said the organization's goals "will not be accomplished by the mujahed movement while it is cut off from public support." Moreover, maintaining and increasing public support was "a decisive factor between victory and defeat," in the absence of which the Islamic mujahed movement would be "crushed in the shadows" and the struggle between the Jihadist elite and the authorities "confined to prison dungeons far from the public and the light of day." Al-Zawahiri urged al-Zarqawi to avoid any action that Iraqis did not understand or approve and to involve them in his planning by "bring[ing] the mujahed movement to the masses and not conduct[ing] the struggle far from them."[44]

Al-Zawahiri also warned that the scenes of slaughter emerging from Iraq were having a damaging effect on the wider jihadi movement. He warned al-Zarqawi, "more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media...[W]e are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma."[45]

He also said the following about targeting Shi'ites:

[M]any of your Muslim admirers amongst the common folk are wondering about your attacks on the Shia. The sharpness of this questioning increases when the attacks are on one of their mosques...My opinion is that this matter won't be acceptable to the Muslim populace however much you have tried to explain it, and aversion to this will continue.

Indeed, questions will circulate among mujahedeen circles and their opinion makers about the correctness of this conflict with the Shia at this time. Is it something that is unavoidable? Or, is it something can be put off until the force of the mujahed movement in Iraq gets stronger? And if some of the operations were necessary for self-defense, were all of the operations necessary? Or, were there some operations that weren't called for? And is the opening of another front now in addition to the front against Americans and the government a wise decision? Or, does this conflict with the Shia lift the burden from the Americans by diverting the mujahedeen to the Shia, while the Americans continue to control matters from afar? And if the attacks on Shia leaders were necessary to put a stop to their plans, then why were there attacks on ordinary Shia? Won't this lead to reinforcing false ideas in their minds, even as it is incumbent on us to preach the call of Islam to them and explain and communicate to guide them to the truth? And can the

> mujahedeen kill all of the Shia in Iraq? Has any Islamic state in history ever tried that? And why kill ordinary Shia considering that they are forgiven because of their ignorance? . . . .And do the brothers forget that both we and the Iranians need to refrain from harming each other at this time in which the Americans are targeting us?[46]

Al-Zawahiri's final theme in his 13-page letter was the issue of political versus military action.[47] Al-Zawahiri stressed the need for Zarqawi to "direct the political action equally with the military action" and suggested that in addition to force, "there be an appeasement of Muslims and a sharing with them in governance." Once more, Al-Zawahiri cautioned the al-Qa'ida in Iraq leader about the use of excessively violent acts saying they risked alienating the Muslim masses, whose enthusiasm was critical to the overall success of the enterprise.

The letter, which seemed to reflect the strategic perspective of the broader al-Qa'ida leadership, was the clearest blueprint of al-Qa'ida's plans for Iraq yet. Less than a week after the United States released the letter, however, al-Qa'ida in Iraq issued a statement on an Islamist Web site rejecting the letter's authenticity. The statement read, "We in al-Qa'ida Organization announce that there is no truth to these claims, which are only based on the imagination of the politicians of the Black [i.e., White] House and their slaves."[48]

Al-Zarqawi and Attacks on Jordan

Al-Zarqawi had threatened early in the insurgency to expand the fighting to foreign countries, however, although his open statements only began to get serious publicity in the summer of 2005. Jordanian intelligence reported that it had intercepted signals that al-Zarqawi had ordered some of his fighters to leave Iraq to carry out attacks in other Arab and Islamic countries in October 2005.

On November 9, 2005, al-Zarqawi's organization struck three U.S.–owned hotels in Amman. Neither the attack nor the targets should have come as a surprise to Jordanian officials, however. Al-Zarqawi had previously attempted to blow up Western hotels in Amman—including the Radisson SAS—as part of millennium celebrations in late 1999. That attack, however, was thwarted by Jordanian intelligence and al-Zarqawi later fled to Afghanistan.[49]

The November 9 bombings at the Radisson SAS, Grand Hyatt, and Days Inn hotels killed at least 60 people and wounded more than a hundred others. The bombers—all Iraqis—deliberately targeted Jordanians, including a Jordanian-Palestinian wedding party. Four Palestinian officials, including Lt. Gen. Bashir Nafe, the head of West Bank security, as well as other foreigners, were also among the casualties.

There were clear links between al-Zarqawi's group and the attack in Jordan. At least two of the bombers—Ali Hussein Ali al-Shamari and his wife, Sajida Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi—seem to have been part of al-Zarqawi's operation in Fallujah. Three of al-Rishawi's brothers were killed by U.S. forces in Iraq.[50] One, Samir Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi, was al-Zarqawi's top lieutenant in Anbar Province and

was killed by a U.S. strike on his pickup truck during operations in Fallujah in 2004. According to the U.S. military, another bomber, Safaa Mohammed Ali, may have been in its custody briefly in 2004. The U.S. military said it detained an Iraqi with the same name as Ali in November 2004, but released him after two weeks because it lacked grounds to hold him.

Although all four bombers were Iraqi nationals, it is possible that al-Zarqawi drew on his own connections in Jordan to carry out the November 9 attacks. There were some 400,000 Iraqis living in Jordan at the time—a number that would greatly increase—some of whom had ties to Salafi jihadists in Iraq and might be willing to help carry out operations in Jordan. Jordanian officials, including King Abdullah II, refused to rule out the possibility that Jordanians may have been involved in the attacks. In the days following the bombings, Jordanian security officials arrested 12 suspects, mostly Jordanians and Iraqis.

The Jordanian reaction to the November 9 bombings was notably different from past reactions to al-Zarqawi attacks. In the days following the triple bombing, tens of thousands of Jordanians marched against al-Zarqawi and pledged their allegiance to King Abdullah. Jordanians seemed to have been shocked by the knowledge that al-Zarqawi, a fellow Jordanian, deliberately sought out Jordanian targets and Jordanian victims. Even al-Zarqawi's own Khalayleh clan joined the public backlash, taking out ads in the country's leading newspapers denouncing their infamous relative and pledging to remove any tribal protection he may have benefited from.[51]

Al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia's media response following the November 9, 2005, bombings in Amman (described below) was unusual in that the group issued three statements relatively quickly. One frequent commentator to a jihadi Web site complained al-Qa'ida had been too hasty in issuing the statements, including the claim of responsibility, alerting Jordanian officials to the fact that there might have been a fourth bomber, as well as a husband and wife team, involved in the attack.

Criticism of al-Zarqawi's attack was apparent on other Internet jihadi Web sites. Postings on Web sites showed that the killing of "innocent Muslims" upset al-Zarqawi's traditional base of supporters and sympathizers. Many criticized the selection of the target, the timing of the attack, as well as the means of the attack. Some even urged the al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia leader to abandon any future military operations that might harm Muslims. One such posting by a writer calling himself "Al-Murshid" or "the guide" read,

> This is both a (religious) task and a pragmatic tactic. . . Acts where many innocent Muslims lose their lives make us lose a lot of popular support. . . The death of the innocent Muslims in this attack. . . was a fact that lived with each Jordanian. Now people say al-Qa'ida kills innocent Muslims.[52]

The backlash against al-Zarqawi's group in the aftermath of the Amman bombings and the declaration of war against Shi'ites pointed to an internal dispute among the jihadists as to their tactics, specifically whether or not the group should target civilians and/or fellow Muslims. At least for public consumption in late 2005,

al-Qa'ida in Iraq had to downplay al-Zarqawi's role, put an Iraqi "Emir" in his place as at least the official leader, and seek to make al-Qa'ida seem to be a more Iraqi and less Sunni organization.

For his part, al-Zarqawi responded to the public backlash by releasing an audiotape on November 18. As already mentioned, earlier statements from al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia had alerted Jordanian officials to the fact that there might have been a fourth bomber, as well as a husband and wife team, involved in the attack. Al-Zarqawi's 26-minute statement began as follows:

> All the world has heard the noise made by the Jordanian Government that the Jordanians are the victims of terrorism and that those terrorists like to shed blood, all this came after three lions have left their lair in Baghdad making their way to the center of Amman to target three hideouts of the crusaders and the Jews.
>
> The Qa'ida has made the blessed step for the coming reasons:
>
> 1. The Jordanian government has announced its infidelity and clearly battled against God.
> 2. The Jordanian army has become the guard of the borders of the Israeli borders, they have banned the Mujahedeen from breaking into the depth of the blessed lands to fight the (brothers of the monkeys and the pigs). How many of the Mujahedeen [have been] killed by a bullet in the back from the Jordanian soldiers securing the borders?
> 3. The Jordanian government has spread vice and corruption. The state has become like a swamp of pornography-the hotels and the refreshment resorts are widely spread on Aqaba and the Dead Sea-we feel pity [for] the harm caused by this corrupted family of both its men and women.
> 4. This state has permitted the Zionist enemy to infiltrate in the Jordanian society socially, economically, and politically. The best ever example given is the Hassan industrial city, where all the capitals are in the hands of the Jews.
> 5. The American's secret prisons in Jordan, working under the supervision of the American intelligence itself, said that there are tens of Mujahedeen in them, going under all different colors of torture done [at] the hands of the Jordanian intelligence members. The *Los Angeles Times* newspaper has mentioned earlier that the best ally for the CIA in the region now is the Jordanian intelligence, and that part of the CIA budget goes to train the members of the Jordanian intelligence members in Amman.
> 6. Concerning Iraq, Jordan has become the rear base for the Americans in their war against the Islamic nation, the American airplanes flies from the Jordanian lands to attack the Mujahedeen, and lest we forget the army of translators (the Infidels). The fleet of vehicles that supplies the American army with food supplies were all driven by the Jordanians.
>
> A message to the Moslem people in Jordan, we assure you that we are the earnest ones about your safety, we know that you were the prey of the criminal regime, they have lied when they say that you become the victims of the Mujahedeen, it is a lie.[53]

Al-Zarqawi justified the attack by claiming that Israeli and American secret agents had been meeting at the three hotels. Al-Zarqawi also repeatedly asserted that Jordanians had not been the targets. Near the end of his statement, he threatened King Abdullah, stating, "Your star is fading. You will not escape your fate, you descendant of traitors. We will be able to reach your head and chop it off."[54]

Some experts believed at the time that the November 9 triple bombings in Amman were only the first example of what would be a series of majority attacks outside Iraq. In an interview with ABC News in mid-November, Iraq's Interior Minister Bayan Jabr said he believed al-Zarqawi might be planning more out-of-area operations. Jabr said his ministry had uncovered information that al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia was planning at least two other attacks—one in Yemen and the other in Egypt—against foreigners and Americans.

Jabr also said that foreigners had been recruited to come to Iraq in order to receive training so that they could return to their home countries to carry out attacks. As proof, he offered several passports the ministry had seized in recent months. Among the nationalities represented were the countries most often associated with foreign fighters in Iraq: Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Algeria. But also seized were passports from France, South Africa, Azerbaijan, India, and Pakistan.[55]

In practice, Iraqi insurgents continued to focus on Iraq, but it did become clear that additional outside attacks were planned. After al-Zarqawi's death, Jordanian intelligence officials stated that he had recruited as many as 300 individuals to carry out terrorist attacks outside of Iraq. Reportedly, these recruits were trained in Iraq and then deployed to their countries of origin and told to wait for instructions as to when and where to carry out attacks.[56]

While some European officials acknowledged that this "bleed out" of terrorists was occurring at least on some level, they put their numbers at much less than 300. The numbers of those who have been identified or caught leaving Europe to wage jihad in Iraq numbered only in the dozens.[57]

Some of the plots that were uncovered did have individuals with ties to the al-Zarqawi network. In Germany, 18 suspected members of Ansar al-Islam and al-Zarqawi's organization had been arrested. This included three Iraqis who were accused of attempting to assassinate Ayad Allawi during a visit to Germany. Counterterrorism officials in France found connections between al-Zarqawi and a Chechen-trained group in Paris discovered in late 2002.[58] Neither al-Zarqawi nor al-Qa'ida in Iraq, however, carried out large-scale operations in Europe or countries other than Jordan and Iraq.

Al-Qa'ida in Iraq's Organizational Structure

As was the case for the other movements dominating the insurgency, there was no expert consensus over how al-Qa'ida organized its operations in Iraq, or over how its structure changed over time. It clearly had to evolve because so many of its leaders were killed and captured, and the Coalition and Iraqi forces steadily improved their intelligence and methods of attack.

On November 10, 2005, the Coalition released a diagram showing the makeup of the Zarqawi network. At a news conference describing the U.S. military's progress in capturing Zarqawi operatives, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch told reporters,

> The insurgency is broken into three groups: terrorists and foreign fighters, Iraqi rejectionists and Saddamists. We believe that the terrorists and foreign fighters are the most lethal group of the insurgency. And it is indeed an organized group, and the face of that group is Zarqawi—al Qa'ida in Iraq...
>
> Over the last several months, we've been able to kill or capture over 100 members of al Qa'ida in Iraq. Since I've talked to you about this graphic last, we have indeed taken out one additional tier-one member.
>
> Reminder: tier one is those people who have direct access to Zarqawi. They are Zarqawi's lieutenants. They are his trusted advisers. They have visibility in al Qa'ida operations not just in Iraq but also across the entire Middle East. And when Zarqawi loses a tier-one member, he's losing one of his most trusted advisers. The Ramadi military leader was killed in an operation in Ramadi a week ago, Abu Abdullah, along with 12 additional terrorists. So one more tier-one individual killed.
>
> Tier two: tier-two leadership plans and facilitates operations in a region of Iraq. They are responsible for flow of money, for flow of information, for flow of munitions, and flow of foreign fighters. Since we talked last, two additional tier-two members have been killed or captured, both in Mosul—the emir of Mosul and the chief of Mosul security. Since we talked last, 15 additional tier-three members have been killed or captured. These are the individuals who control cells, local cells—both Iraqis and foreign fighters—serving as cell leaders.[59]

MNF-I listed 38 "Tier-2" and 71 "Tier-3" operatives killed or captured. According to the U.S. military, the influence of foreign fighters was most predominant in Tier 3. Speaking about the new developments, Lynch said, "We have great success at killing or capturing his leaders, his cell leaders, his coordinators and his lieutenants, and this chart just continues to expand, and eventually, he's going to be on this chart."[60] Two things are striking, however, about such data. First, the level of insurgent attacks never diminished, and second, the MNF-I never provided similar public data on the other movements driving the insurgency.

THE DECLINING ROLE OF THE BA'ATHISTS

By the spring of 2005, the majority of Coalition efforts—and the attention of the media—focused on the neo-Salafi elements of the insurgency. There were, however, continued efforts to capture Ba'athist leaders in Saddam Hussein's regime. For example, the office of the Iraqi prime minister called for the arrest of the following six senior members of the former regime in March 2005:[61]

- Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri: Believed to be the leader of the New Regional Command and New Ba'ath Party. (He died on November 10, 2005.)
- Muhammed Younis al-Ahmad: Financial facilitator and operational leader of the New Regional Command and New Ba'ath Party.

- Rashid Ta'an Kazim: Central Ba'ath Party Regional Chairman in Al Anbar Province.
- Abd Al-Baqi Abd Al-Karim Al-Abdallah Al-Sa'adun: Recruiter and financer of terrorist activity in eastern and central Iraq.
- Aham Hasan Kaka al-Ubaydi: A former intelligence officer and now associated with Ansar Al Islam.
- Fadhi Ibrahim Mahmud Mashadani (aka Abu Huda): Top member of the New Ba'ath Party and a key financier of insurgent and terrorist activity.

The remaining Ba'athist elements in the insurgency benefited from the fact that they had access to some of the former regime's money. They did steadily tighten their organization and purge suspect members. In practice, however, they had steadily less impact on the fighting and less support from the overall Sunni community. The Sunni power structure steadily evolved into neo-Salafi movements, non-Ba'athists groups and assemblies, and a complex mix of local and tribal leaders.

TENSIONS BETWEEN NEO-SALAFI INSURGENTS AND MORE "NATIONALIST INSURGENTS"

The cooperation between the more "nationalist" Iraqi Sunni insurgent groups and the Islamic extremist groups was uncertain. In September 2005, Army Maj. Gen. Richard P. Zahner openly acknowledged that the Ba'athist insurgency had been surpassed by the terrorist campaign led by al-Zarqawi's group. Speaking to the *Washington Post,* Zahner said,

> You'll see some of the old regime elements [out] there, mainly just to maintain pressure and, frankly, accountability . . . But when you look at those individuals central the inflicting of huge amounts of violence, it really is not those folks. The Saddamists, the former regime guys, they're riding this.[62]

In some cases, MNF-I and U.S. officials saw evidence that secular Sunni groups, and even Hussein loyalists, were cooperating with extreme Islamists. In Mosul, Ba'athists worked with Salafists to attack American troops and derail the election process.[63]

The more nationalist Sunni insurgents were also becoming more willing and able to acquire leverage in the Iraqi political process. For example, some Sunni Arab nationalist insurgents groups saw the national elections as an opportunity to gain power and called upon their followers to forgo violence on election day, while al-Qa'ida and its allies called for attacks. This seemed to lead to outright clashes between elements of al-Qa'ida in Iraq and Sunni nationalists in the months leading up to the election, particularly in cities within the Sunni triangle such as Qaim, Taji, Ramadi, and Yusefiya.

There were cautioning reports of Iraqi Sunni executions of foreign Sunni Islamic extremists after the first such reports surfaced in November 2004.[64] One such case took place on August 13, 2005, when Sunni Iraqis in Ramadi took up arms against

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's forces in defense of their Shi'ite neighbors. This fighting came on the heels of a proclamation by al-Zarqawi that Ramadi's 3,000 Shi'ites leave the city of some 200,000 residents. The order was given in retaliation for supposed expulsions of Sunni minorities by Shi'ite militias in the mostly Shi'ite south of Iraq. Yet in Ramadi, members of the Sunni Dulaimi tribe formed security cordons around Shi'ite homes and fought al-Zarqawi's men with grenade launchers and automatic weapons. All told, five foreign fighters and two local tribal fighters were killed.[65]

Sunni Arab Divisions over Playing a Role in the Political Process

Sunni Islamist extremist movements continued to make Iraq's political process a primary target before and after the January 30, 2005, elections. Such insurgents feared that a relatively secure and successful election would cement Shi'ite dominance in Iraq and would signal the demise of both the Islamist and Ba'athist visions for the future of Iraq.

On December 29, 2004, Ansar al-Sunna declared, "All polling stations and those in them will be targets for our brave soldiers."[66] Similarly, the Islamic Army in Iraq warned in mid-January 2005, "Do not allow polling stations in your neighborhood because they put your lives in danger. Do not also interfere with the employees who work in these voting centers, as they will be killed. Keep away from these places as they will be attacked."[67] On January 23, 2005, al-Zarqawi released an audiotape saying, "We have declared an all-out war on this evil principle of democracy and those who follow this wrong ideology."[68]

The tensions over these different approaches to the political process were compounded by the fact that many Iraqi Sunnis, even those who sympathized with the insurgency, strongly opposed attacks on Sunni recruits to the Iraqi forces, and the killings of Sunnis in local governments.

The more mainstream Sunni groups, however, soon came to recognize that failing to play a political role effectively deprived the Sunnis of power, provided a "blank" check to other political factions, and meant they had little leverage to block developments they opposed. This experience was reinforced by the debates over the new constitution and the obvious cost to Sunnis of not previously participating in the political process.

These Sunni efforts to create a new political identity included both the minority that participated in the new government and the political process, some who had boycotted it, and political parties like the Muslim Brotherhood and the Iraqi Islamic Party. They also included clerical bodies like the Association of Islamic Scholars, which was headed by Dr. Muthanna Harith al-Dhari—an Egyptian-educated Islamic scholar—and claimed to represent some 6,000 mosques, or 80 percent of the total.[69]

Iraq's new president and prime minister publicly encouraged their efforts, although there was far less practical support for broadening the base of the government and conciliation at other levels. The search for a Sunni Minister of Defense, a key factor that delayed the creation of a new government, examined some ten candidates before choosing Sadoon al-Dulaimi in early May 2003. The new

leaders also resisted the calls of other Shi'ites and Kurds for the systematic purging of all Sunnis with ties to the Ba'ath, including many in the Iraqi forces.[70]

While the details are unclear, the new Iraqi government and the United States also attempted to hold a dialogue with the more moderate insurgents. At least one such effort became public. In summer 2005, a former Iraqi electricity minister, Iyham al-Samarri, announced that he had established a sort of communication organization through which the various insurgent groups could convey their views and concerns to both the elected Iraqi government and the Coalition.[71]

Al-Samarri had a questionable past and a controversial tenure as electricity minister. Furthermore, it could not be substantiated that al-Samarri had any contact with any insurgents as he said. Not long after he asserted this ability to speak on behalf of the insurgents, militant groups criticized him via the Internet saying that he did not speak for them and that he was "spreading lies."

Nevertheless, an Internet statement appeared a week later stating that the Army of the Mujahedeen and the Islamic Army in Iraq had appointed a spokesman, Ibrahim Youssef al-Shammari, to speak on behalf of the two insurgent groups. His identity was confirmed on Web sites linked to the two militant organizations.[72] This suggests some of the militants were moving to form political wings.[73]

These shifts did involve the participation of some of the more moderate Sunni insurgents in the Iraqi political process. It marked a profound shift in their thinking and tactics and led to a growing rift between such insurgents and al-Qa'ida forces in Iraq. This rift became more evident in the fall of 2005, with clashes erupting between al-Qa'ida fighters and Sunni insurgents.[74]

Many Sunnis participated in the debate over the constitution and the referendum that followed the elections. During the summer and fall of 2005, Sunni leaders threatened that a constitution forced through without the consent and consideration of the Sunni population would result in a stepped-up insurgency. Nevertheless, many Sunni leaders and voters, including those from a number of insurgent-dominated or influenced areas, participated in the October 15, 2005, constitutional referendum.

In the weeks prior to the referendum, Abu Theeb, the commander of a cell of Sunni insurgents north of Baghdad known as the Anger Brigade, traveled the countryside visiting Sunni villages. The message was the same at each stop: Sunnis should register to vote but vote no in the referendum.

Abu Theeb, who had been fighting Coalition troops for more than two years, described the boycott of the January election as a mistake. "It is a new jihad . . . There is a time for fighting, and a time for politics."[75] Theeb was so determined to ensure a Sunni turnout that he supplied a local polling station with his own guards on the day of the vote. Despite an al-Qa'ida vow to kill anyone, including Sunnis, who participated in the referendum, Theeb ordered his followers to protect the local school to ensure that Sunni voters would be safe. Theeb even reprimanded a young follower for planning an IED attack the night before the election, saying, "I thought we agreed that nothing will happen for the next few days."[76]

As discussed earlier, Sunni participation in the referendum was far greater than in the January 30 elections. Sunnis had been deeply divided about whether or not it was

a good decision to boycott the elections. They did, however, largely vote against the constitution. Insurgent threats limited voting in some areas, but the decision to participate was clear. Sunnis also began actively forming parties and movements to participate in the upcoming December 15 elections.

Several Sunni nationalist insurgent groups appeared to have struck a deal with U.S. officials that amounted to a short-term cease-fire to enable a relatively peaceful election period. One self-identified insurgent field commander told *Time Magazine* he had been given orders not to conduct attacks in the four days surrounding the election date of December 15, 2005.[77] There are several logical reasons to explain such a course of action:

- Both al-Qa'ida in Iraq and Sunni nationalist insurgents stated that they did not want to injure Sunnis who might go to the polls on Election Day.
- Several Sunni groups appeared to be tacitly encouraging Sunni voters so as to secure a place in the Iraqi government, unlike last January's election.
- Other Sunni groups may have made the tactical decision to wait out elections and then declare them illegitimate no matter what the results and resume attacks.
- Other Sunni groups may have made the calculation that the election results could never satisfy Sunni voters. By waiting until the vote was over, such groups could then claim to have given democracy a chance, perhaps garnering renewed Sunni support.
- It is likely that insurgent groups were deterred from attacks by the ban on motor vehicles and the massive security presence on Election Day.

Strategic considerations may have played a role in insurgent decisions to implement a short-term cease-fire, but tight security measures played a role as well. U.S. force levels increased to about 160,000 for the December 15 election, although they dropped to 138,000 (preelection levels) in the first quarter of 2006.[78] Over 230,000 Iraqi soldiers and police were set up in what was called the "ring system" of defense in which police were stationed inside the polling stations, special battalions outside to man checkpoints and conduct searches, and beyond them Iraqi Army battalions and Coalition forces waited as a last resort. In addition, all traffic was prohibited near polling places and between provinces.[79]

Furthermore, some of the deadliest attacks to date occurred during the election campaign:[80]

- **October 31, 2005:** A car bomb exploded in Basra, killing at least 20 people.
- **November 2, 2005:** A suicide bomber detonated a minibus near an outdoor market south of Baghdad, killing 20 people.
- **November 10, 2005:** A suicide bomber struck a Baghdad restaurant popular with police, killing 35 people.
- **November 18, 2005:** Near-simultaneous suicide bombings killed 74 worshippers at two Shi'ite mosques near the Iranian border.

- **November 19, 2005:** A suicide bomber detonated his car in a crowd of Shi'ite Muslim mourners north of Baghdad, killing at least 36 people.
- **November 24, 2005:** A suicide bomber blew up his car outside a hospital south of Baghdad, killing 30 people.
- **December 4, 2005:** Supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr threw shoes and stones at former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi as he entered the Grand Imam Ali shrine in Najaf to pray. Later that day, gunmen fire a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) at his party offices in Najaf. No one was injured.
- **December 6, 2005:** Two suicide bombers detonated their explosives at Baghdad's police academy, killing at least 43 people.
- **December 8, 2005:** A suicide bomber detonated his explosives on a bus in Baghdad, killing 32 people and wounding 44 others.

These attacks were reflected in U.S. casualties: January 26, 2005—just before the election—was the worst day of the war to date with 37 American dead.

ESTIMATES OF TOTAL INSURGENT FORCES

Estimates of insurgent forces as divergent as 3,500 and 400,000 were being cited in the spring and early summer of 2005.[81] U.S. and Iraqi officials were, however, consistently careful to note that they were uncertain as to whether the numbers were increasing or decreasing with time as a result of U.S. and Iraqi operations versus increases in political and other tensions that led Iraqi Arab Sunnis to join the insurgents. There was no evidence that the number of insurgents was declining as a result of Coalition and Iraqi attacks to date. U.S. experts stated in the spring of 2005 that they had no evidence of a decline in insurgent numbers in spite of large numbers of kills and captures since the summer of 2004.

U.S. officials noted that almost all counts included only men, although women did play an active role in support functions, and a number of insurgent groups operated in a family environment rather than as isolated groups of men. Mixing active insurgents with families provided support in ways that freed male insurgents to act and provided protective cover that could be used to charge that Coalition and Iraqi forces were abusing civilians when insurgent cells and facilities were attacked.

This may explain why a few outlying estimates of the total strength of Arab Sunni insurgents were still as low as 3,500 full-time actives making up the "core" forces in 2005. Most U.S. military estimates ranged between 8,000 and 18,000, perhaps reaching over 20,000 when the ranks swelled for major operations. Iraqi intelligence officials, on the other hand, sometimes issued figures for the total number of Iraqi sympathizers and insurgents as high as 200,000, with a core of anywhere between 15,000 and 40,000 fighters and another 160,000 supporters.

Newsweek quoted U.S. sources as putting the total of insurgents at 12,000–20,000 in late June 2005. Another U.S. expert was quoted as saying Iraq had some 1,000 foreign jihadists, 500 Iraqi jihadists, 15,000–30,000 former regime elements, and

some 400,000 auxiliaries and support personnel.[82] Throughout 2005, the numbers put forth publicly fluctuated between 15,000 and 20,000 for the total number of insurgents. Near the fall of 2005, estimates of foreign insurgents were between 700 and 2,000. That estimate stayed consistent into 2006.[83]

The true figure might well have fallen somewhere within this range of different figures, but the exact number is largely irrelevant. There was no single meaningful definition of the term. There were many different kinds of "insurgents": cadres, full time, part time, sympathizers, collaborators, and those who passively tolerated their actions.

In any case, it was insurgent leaders, cell group leaders, cell leaders, and experts that determined the success or failure of the insurgency. In spite of many killings and arrests, these cadres became steadily more experienced, adapting tactics and methods of attack as fast as the Coalition could counter them. They also developed networks with some form of central command, planning, and financing. These were the numbers that were truly important, but no one made a meaningful unclassified estimate of this aspect of insurgent strength. As the lines between insurgency and civil war blurred in 2006, these estimates became even more important, but the Coalition still focused on counting the number of violent incidents rather than the strength of insurgent networks. Furthermore, the ability of insurgents to find replacements was as critical as their numbers at any given time.

FINANCING THE INSURGENCY

The exact sources of insurgent finances throughout the insurgency were another source of expert debate. Analysts believed that elements of Saddam Hussein's regime sought refuge in the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria at various points before, during, and after major combat operations in Iraq. Those elements were then able to establish a financial base from which to send funds to the insurgents on the ground.

In July 2005 a senior intelligence officer in the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, Caleb Temple, testified before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities and the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Temple stated that the insurgents' financiers had the connections and enough money to fund their activities, perhaps even increase the violence, for some time. He stated,

> We believe terrorist and insurgent expenses are moderate and pose little significant restraints to armed groups in Iraq. In particular, arms and munitions costs are minimal —leaving us to judge that the bulk of the money likely goes towards international and local travel, food and lodging of fighters and families of dead fighters; bribery and payoffs of government officials, families and clans; and possibly into the personal coffers of critical middlemen and prominent terrorist leaders.[84]

Both Temple and Acting Assistant Treasury Secretary Daniel Glaser asserted that various criminal activities as well as certain Islamic charities also contributed to the

flow of funds to insurgents in Iraq. Vital to strangling the insurgency, Temple stated, was the ability to stanch the flow of money. He asserted,

> Drying up money and stopping its movement degrades terrorist and insurgent operations. It hinders recruitment and impedes couriers, disrupts procurement of bomb components, and creates uncertainty in the minds of suicide bombers regarding whether their families will receive promised compensation.[85]

In July 28, 2005, testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Glaser listed some of the most common methods of funding the insurgency:[86]

- Funds provided by charities, Iraqi expatriates, and other deep pocket donors, primarily in the Gulf, but also in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, and Europe;
- Criminal activities, such as kidnapping for ransom, possible narcotics trafficking, robbery, theft, extortion, smuggling, and counterfeiting (goods and currency).

Glaser also reported on some of the efforts under way to help stanch these cash flows:

- Since March 2003, the US Government has focused on the need to locate, freeze, and repatriate Iraqi assets from around the world, as well as to find cash and other assets within Iraq that were stolen and hidden by Former Regime Elements.
- In May 2003 the United Nations Security Council adopted UNSCR 1483, which calls on U.N. Member States to identify, freeze and transfer to the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI) assets of senior officials of the former Iraqi regime and their immediate family members, including entities owned or controlled by them or by persons acting on their behalf. The President subsequently issued Executive Order (E.O.) 13315, which authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to freeze the assets of former regime elements. To date, under E.O. 13315, the Department of the Treasury has designated scores of Iraq-related entities and individuals (including 55 senior Iraqi officials who were named by the President in issuing E.O 13315, and 47 administrative or "derivative" designations.) The US Government, in turn, submits these names to the United Nations for listing by the UN 1518 Committee under UNSCR 1483.
- Only a week ago, the Department of the Treasury designated six of Saddam Hussein's nephews (sons of Saddam's half brother and former presidential advisor, Sabawi Ibrahim Hasan Al-Tikriti), and we understand that their names have now been accepted at the UN. Four of the designated individuals provided financial support (and in some cases, weapons and explosives) to Iraqi insurgents. Similarly, on June 17, 2005, we designated, Muhammad Yunis Ahmad for providing funding, leadership and support from his base in Syria to several insurgent groups that are conducting attacks in Iraq.
- On June 9, 2005, we also designated two associated Syrian individuals, General Zuhayr Shalish and Asif Shalish and a related asset, the Syria-based SES International Corporation for their support to senior officials of the former Iraqi regime. SES also acted as false end-user for the former Iraqi regime and facilitated Iraq's procurement of illicit military goods in contravention of UN sanctions.

- Just as there is a U.N. Security Council Resolution requiring countries to freeze the assets of former Iraqi regime elements, so too are there U.N. Security Council Resolutions requiring countries to freeze the assets of individuals and entities related to al Qa'ida, Usama bin Laden, and the Taliban (UNSCR 1267) and other global terrorist groups (UNSCR 1373). The US implements its obligations under these resolutions through E.O. 13224. To date, the Treasury Department has designated over 400 individuals and entities under E.O. 13224. These actions include individuals and entities tied to jihadist insurgency groups: —Sulayman Khalid Darwish (January 25, 2005) (Syria-based Zarqawi supporter/financier), also designated by the UN, pursuant to UNSCR 1267; Syria joined the US in co-designating Darwish at the UN.
- US outreach efforts to countries in the Gulf region are manifold, both bilaterally and multilaterally. For example, just this calendar year I have personally traveled to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait, and have led the US delegation to the Middle East/North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENA FATF)—a new multilateral body that works to ensure the implementation of comprehensive anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing systems throughout the region. Launched in November 2004, this 14-member body held its first plenary session in Bahrain in April 2005 and is preparing for its second plenary session in September of this year, currently scheduled to take place in Beirut. This body has the potential to be effective in persuading its members to implement systems to freeze assets in a timely and effective manner.
- We also have extensive outreach efforts to Europe—most prominently the US-EU Counter-Terrorist Financing Working Group, chaired by Assistant Secretary of State Anthony Wayne. Through this and other mechanisms, we are working to ensure the effective and aggressive implementation of targeted financial sanctions throughout Europe.
- The full range of US efforts against terrorist financing are coordinated by the Terrorist Financing Policy Coordination Committee (PCC), which is chaired by Deputy National Security Advisor Juan Zarate, and includes representatives from the Departments of the Treasury, State, Justice, and Defense, as well as representatives from the law enforcement and intelligence communities.

THE ISSUE OF FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS[87]

During 2004 and 2005, both the Iraqi government and U.S. and Coalition sources often blamed the insurgency on outside influences. In fact, this was never the case. The fact that young men were being recruited from countries in North Africa, the Sudan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and other countries never meant that foreign fighters dominated even the Iraqi Islamist extremist organizations. Recruiting smaller numbers of outsiders as cannon fodder, sacrifice pawns, or "martyrs" was all too easy in a region where religious extremists learned how to exploit religious feelings.

This did not, however, mean that those directing the efforts of such groups, carrying out the support activity, or doing much of the day-to-day fighting were foreign fighters or that Coalition and Iraqi government officers and officials kept their roles in perspective. In June 2005, U.S. Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, commanding general of the Coalition forces in Iraq, identified the foreign fighters as the most violent group

in Iraq's ongoing insurgency. According to Vines, insurgent activity among Iraqis was being driven by money, not ideology, and foreign jihadists were using their financial resources to get Iraqis to attack other Iraqis.[88]

U.S. intelligence experts privately made it clear, however, that it was doubtful that foreign volunteers made up even 10 percent of the insurgent force, and they may have made up less than 5 percent. While the number of foreign volunteers increased through the spring of 2005, U.S. experts felt they then declined, largely as a result of U.S. and Iraqi government military operations in western Iraq and improvements in security in the Syrian-Iraqi border area. While some estimates of the total number of such volunteers reached as high as 3,000, others went from the high hundreds to over 1,000.[89] The fact was that there was no basis for even a credible guesstimate, and the numbers kept fluctuating over time.

There was only limited evidence that Iraq was ever a unique "magnet" for foreign volunteers. Iraq was scarcely the only center of such activity, and foreign volunteers also operated in the West, in North Africa and the Levant, in the Gulf, and in Central, South, and Southeast Asia. Nations as diverse as Afghanistan, Chechnya, Indonesia, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, and the Sudan also had training centers, staging and support facilities, or internal conflicts involving neo-Salafi extremists. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict did as much to fuel Arab and Islamic anger as the Iraq conflict, and such extremists capitalized on political, economic, and social problems and tensions throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Nevertheless, Iraq had become a critical center for Sunni Islamist extremist activity, and the combination of foreign and Iraqi extremists created a growing threat that such extremists could destabilize a state and create a regionwide civil war. More broadly, they sought to make Islam a captive to a kind of violent, intolerant, and ruthlessly exclusive ideological movement that would deprive it of a future by driving it back toward an imaginary and perverted vision of the past.

No one knew where most of the foreign volunteers present in Iraq at any given time came from. The mix seemed to vary constantly, and estimates differed from source to source. Foreigners made up less than 600 out of some 14,000 detainees as of June 2005. Coalition experts estimated that they had made up less than 5 percent of insurgent casualties and detainees to date.[90] For example, the U.S. military reported that 375 foreigners had been detained in Iraq in 2005 as of late October. The percentage of foreign detainees was only a little over 4 percent in early 2005 and had actually dropped by the end of 2005. Among those detained were 78 Egyptians; 66 Syrians; 41 Sudanese; 32 Saudis; 17 Jordanians; 13 Iranians; 2 Britons; and one each from France, Israel, Ireland, and the United States.[91]

Different Estimates of Foreign Volunteers

Reuven Paz, a respected Israeli analyst, attempted to calculate the composition of foreign volunteers in Jihadi-Salafi insurgent groups by examining the national origin of 154 insurgents killed in the fighting from the Battle of Fallujah through March

2005. He estimated that 94 (61 percent) were Saudi, 16 (10.4 percent) were Syrian, 13 (8.4 percent) were Iraqi, 11 (7.1 percent) were Kuwaiti, 4 came from Jordan, 3 from Lebanon, 2 from Libya, 2 from Algeria, 2 from Morocco, 2 from Yemen, 2 from Tunisia, 1 from Palestine, 1 from Dubai, and 1 from the Sudan. He estimated that 33 of the 154 were killed in suicide attacks: 23 Saudis, 5 Syrians, 2 Kuwaitis, 1 Libyan, 1 Iraqi, and 1 Moroccan. These figures were drawn from a very small sample and were highly uncertain, but they do illustrate the diversity of backgrounds.[92]

The Saudi National Security Assessment Project, however, estimated that there were approximately 3,000 foreign fighters in Iraq in the spring of 2005 (see Figure 6.4). These figures, and the breakdown by nationality, were rounded "best estimates," based on reports of Saudi and other intelligence services. They drew upon the interrogations of hundreds of captured militants and a comprehensive analysis of militant activities. This included interviews and analysis of activities by both Saudi and non-Saudi militants. Intelligence reports prepared by regional governments were also consulted, which provided not only names of militants, but also valuable information on the networks that they relied upon to enter Iraq and conduct their activities.

The conclusion of the Saudi investigation was that the number of Saudi volunteers in August 2005 was around 12 percent of the foreign contingent (approximately

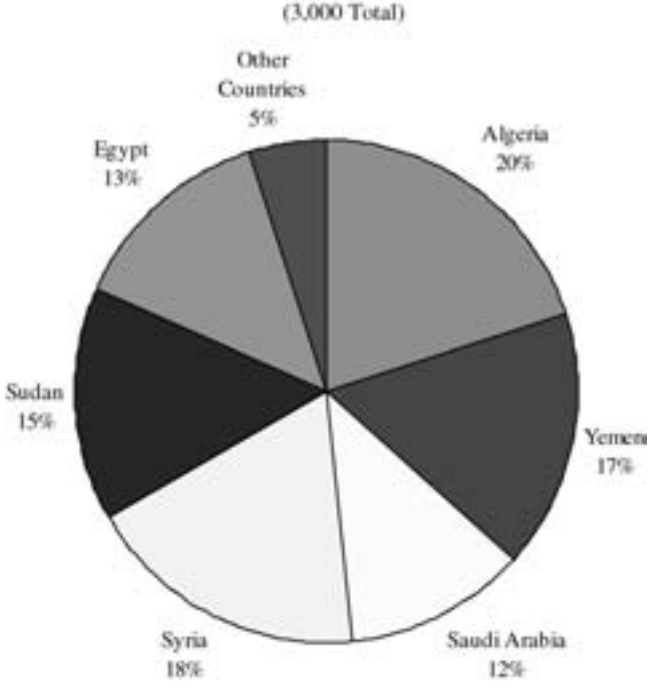


Figure 6.4 Foreign Militants in Iraq

350), or 1.2 percent of the total insurgency of approximately 30,000. Algerians constitute the largest contingent at 20 percent, followed closely by Syrians (18 percent), Yemenis (17 percent), Sudanese (15 percent), Egyptians (13 percent), and those from other countries (5 percent). Discussions with U.S. and Iraqi experts indicated that they felt that Saudi estimates were roughly correct, although they cautioned that they did not have reliable numbers for either the total number of volunteers or their origin by country. An analysis of the numbers of foreign fighters in Iraq and their countries of origin concurred with the Saudi assessment.[93]

While al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia had become virtually synonymous with foreign volunteers in much of the media, its membership was largely Iraqi. U.S. authorities believed al-Zarqawi commanded as many as 1,000 fighters and a much larger group of sympathizers, as of November 2005, but did not believe foreign volunteers came close to being a majority.[94] The U.S.–Iraqi operations in Tal Afar focused on attacking al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia in September 2005. Although this operation led to the capture of 1,000 suspected insurgents, none proved to be foreigners.[95]

U.S. experts and top-level Iraqi officials estimated in November 2005 that at least 90 percent of the Sunni fighters were Iraqi and the total might be closer to 94–96 percent. Coalition sources reported that only 3.8 percent of some 13,300 detainees held in November 2005 were foreign. These percentages of foreigners were lower than estimates made in the early winter of 2005 and marked a sharp contrast to claims that the insurgency was being driven by large numbers of foreign volunteers.

There also were foreign volunteers in other Sunni Islamist extremist groups like Ansar al-Islam (also known as Ansar al-Sunnah) and the Islamic Army of Iraq. At least six other smaller terrorist groups were operating in Iraq that relied on foreign volunteers, and many of the groups supporting the "Ba'ath" seemed to have foreign volunteers as well.

Intelligence analysis—corroborated by information from Internet chat rooms and Web sites run by Islamists—indicated that such groups established terrorist training camps for both foreign volunteers and Iraqi volunteers in the mountains of northern Iraq and in the country's western desert along its 450-mile border with Syria. There were also reports of staging facilities and indoctrination centers inside of Syria.

In any case, foreign volunteers had a special impact on the insurgency because they were used in extreme attacks that helped provoke a civil war between Iraq's Arab Sunnis and its Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and other minorities. Foreign Sunni Islamist extremist volunteers did seem to have carried out a large number of suicide bombings since 2003. These were among some of the bloodiest and most-publicized insurgent attacks.

Anything like 3,000 foreign fighters in Iraq would pose a serious threat, but the exact numbers were largely irrelevant. All it took was enough foreign and Iraqi volunteers to continue to support suicide attacks and violent bombings and seek to drive Iraqi Sunnis toward a major and intense civil war. They also posed a threat because their actions gave bin Laden and other neo-Salafi extremist movements publicity and credibility among the angry and alienated in the Islamic world, and because

many were likely to survive and be the source of violence and extremism in other countries.

One U.S. defense official estimated that Iraqis had directly carried out less than 10 percent of more than 500 suicide bombings.[96] Other experts put the number at well above 30 percent. What was clear was that the number of such attacks accelerated sharply in the spring and summer of 2005; the Associated Press counted at least 213 suicide attacks in July.

U.S. Air Force General, and MNF-I spokesperson, Don Alston stated, "The foreign fighters are the ones most often behind the wheel of suicide car bombs, or most often behind any suicide situation," and General Abizaid stated that the Coalition had seen a rise in suicide bombers coming from North Africa; particularly Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.[97]

Nevertheless, even the highest estimate of foreign volunteers paled beside the estimates of Iraqi insurgents. U.S. experts put the total number of full-time insurgents at around 20,000–30,000 in December 2005. Virtually all reports indicated the insurgency remained largely homegrown. Moreover, if the number of foreign detainees was any measure of how important foreign militants were, it indicated that it was their fanaticism and willingness to use extreme violence that was the key issue.

No country on Iraq's borders could or did prevent all forms of infiltration. Anyone with a convincing set of papers could cross at legal border crossings, and minor bribes were often enough to gain permission to enter. Smuggling and "fees" simply to jump the inspection line were common, and inspection was often minimal.

Jordan did offer some security along its border, although it was scarcely "sealed." The same was true of Turkey. The Saudi government had some success in its efforts to seal the border between the Kingdom and Iraq. However, it admitted that traffic crossed the border in both directions, with Iraqi smugglers going into Saudi Arabia and some infiltrators moving in the opposite direction.

Saudi Militants in Iraq: A Case Study

Estimates of the number and the role of Saudi volunteers illustrate these points. The Saudi intelligence services made a major effort to estimate the number of Saudi infiltrators that moved across the Saudi border—or far more often transited through third states like Syria.

Through August 2005, approximately 352 Saudis were thought to have successfully entered Iraq (and an additional 63 had been stopped at the border by Saudi security services). Of these, 150 were thought to be active, 72 were known from al-Qa'ida compiled lists to be active in Iraq,[98] 74 were presumed in detention (a maximum of 20 in U.S. custody and 3 in Kurdish custody), and 56 were presumed dead (see Figure 6.5).

Interrogations and other Saudi intelligence gathering operations revealed that these individuals did not come exclusively from a single geographical region in Saudi Arabia, but from various areas in the Kingdom, especially from the South, Hijaz, and Najd. They were usually affiliated with the most prominent conservative tribes and

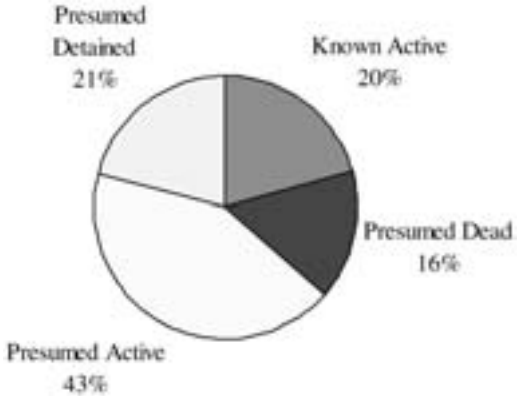


Figure 6.5 Saudi Militants in Iraq through September 2005

were generally middle class. Most were employed, many were educated, and all were Sunni.[99]

The Saudi government interrogated dozens of nationals either returning from Iraq or caught at the border as part of a massive crackdown on Saudi militants attempting to enter Iraq. The average age of these fighters was 17–25, but a few were older. Some had families and young children. In contrast, other fighters from across the Middle East and North Africa tended to be in their late 20s or 30s.

The Saudi infiltrators were questioned by the intelligence services about their motives for joining the insurgency. One important point was the number who insisted that they were not militants before the Iraq War. Of those who were interrogated, a full 85 percent were not on any government watch list (which comprised most of the recognized extremists and militants), nor were they known members of al-Qa'ida.

The names of those who died fighting in Iraq generally appeared on militant Web sites as martyrs, and Saudi investigators also approached the families of these individuals for information regarding the background and motivation of the ones who died. According to these interviews as well, the bulk of the Saudi fighters in Iraq were driven to extremism by the war itself.

Most of the Saudi militants in Iraq were motivated by revulsion at the idea of an Arab land being occupied by a non-Arab country. These feelings were intensified by the images of the occupation they saw on television and the Internet—many of which came from sources intensely hostile to the United States and the war in Iraq, and which repeated or manipulated "worst-case" images.

The catalyst most often cited was Abu Ghraib, though images from Guantanamo Bay were mentioned. Some recognized the name of a relative or friend posted on a Web site and felt compelled to join the cause. These factors, combined with the agitation regularly provided by militant clerics in Friday prayers, helped lead them to volunteer.

In one case, a 24-year-old student from a prominent Saudi tribe—who had no previous affiliation with militants—explained that he was motivated after the U.S. invasion to join the militants by stories he saw in the press and through the forceful rhetoric of a mid-level cleric sympathetic to al-Qa'ida. The cleric introduced him and three others to a Yemeni, who unbeknown to them was an al-Qa'ida member.

After undergoing several weeks of indoctrination, the group made its way to Syria and then was escorted across the border to Iraq where the group members met their Iraqi handlers. There they were assigned to a battalion, comprised mostly of Saudis (though those planning the attacks were exclusively Iraqi). After being appointed to carry out a suicide attack, the young man had second thoughts and returned home to Saudi Arabia where he was arrested in January 2004. The cleric who had instigated the whole affair was also brought up on terrorism charges.

There were other similar stories regarding young men who were enticed by rogue clerics into taking up arms in Iraq. Many were instructed to engage in suicide attacks and, as a result, never returned home. Interrogations of nearly 150 Saudis suspected of planning to the join the Iraqi insurgency indicated that they were heeding the calls of clerics and activists to "drive the infidels out of Arab land."

Like Jordan and most Arab countries, the Saudi government sought to limit such calls for action, which inevitably fed neo-Salafi extremists at the expense of legitimate interpretations of Islam. King Abdullah issued a strong new directive that held those who concealed knowledge of terrorist activities as guilty as the terrorists themselves. However, many religious leaders and figures in Arab nations have issued fatwas stating that waging jihad in Iraq is justified by the Koran due to its "defensive" nature. To illustrate, in October 2004, several clerics in Saudi Arabia said that "it was the duty of every Muslim to go and fight in Iraq."[100]

On June 20, 2005, the Saudi government released a new list of 36 known al-Qa'ida operatives in the Kingdom (all but one of those released on previous lists had been killed by Saudi security forces, so these individuals represented the foot soldiers of al-Qa'ida, and they were considered far less dangerous). After a major crackdown in the Kingdom, as many as 21 of these low-level al-Qa'ida members fled to Iraq.

Interior Minister Prince Nayef commented that when they returned, they could be even "tougher" than those who fought in Afghanistan. "We expect the worse from those who went to Iraq," he said. "They will be worse and we will be ready for them."[101] According to Prince Turki al-Faisal, the former Saudi Intelligence Chief and the Ambassador to the United States, approximately 150 Saudis are currently operating in Iraq.[102]

In mid-November 2005, Iraq's National Security Adviser, Mowaffaq al-Rubaie told reporters that most of the suicide bombers in Iraq were Saudi citizens:

> We do not have the least doubt that nine out of 10 of the suicide bombers who carry out suicide bombing operations among Iraqi citizens . . . are Arabs who have crossed the border with Syria.
>
> Most of those that blow themselves up in Iraq are Saudi nationals.[103]

But al-Rubaie's comments appeared to conflict with findings released the previous month by Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch who said some 312 foreign nationals, including 32 Saudis, had been captured while taking part in the insurgency since April. With 78 and 66, respectively, two countries—Egypt and Syria—made up the largest foreign contingents, accounting for almost half of all captured foreign insurgents.[104]

The Saudi role in providing money may have been more important. Unlike the foreign fighters from poor countries such as Yemen and Egypt, Saudis entering Iraq often brought in money to support the cause, arriving with personal funds between $10,000 and $15,000. Saudis were the most sought-after militants, not only because of their cash contributions, but also because of the media attention their deaths as "martyrs" brought to the cause. This was a powerful recruiting tool. Because of the wealth of Saudi Arabia, and its well-developed press, there also tended to be much more coverage of Saudi deaths in Iraq than of those from poorer countries.

In contrast, if an Algerian or Egyptian militant died in Iraq, it was unlikely that many in his home country would ever know. For instance, interrogations revealed that when an Algerian conducted a suicide bombing, the insurgency rarely had a means of contacting his next of kin. Saudis, however, always provided a contact number and a well-developed system was in place for recording and disseminating any "martyrdom operations" by Saudis.

Syria and Foreign Volunteers

Experts differed as to how much of al-Zarqawi's recruiting and training took place in Syria and with Syrian backing. There were reports that al-Zarqawi and top lieutenants met in Syria in the spring of 2005, but these meetings were not formally confirmed by U.S. officials. In fact, U.S. intelligence assessments expressed doubt in June 2005 that al-Zarqawi had crossed into Syria earlier in the year, stating that such an event was inconsistent with Syria's and al-Zarqawi's patterns of behavior. U.S., British, and Iraqi experts did believe, however, that a substantial number of recruits passed through Syria, with Syrian tolerance or deliberate indifference—if not active support.[105]

Syria showed in the past that it could crack down on such insurgent activities and infiltration when it wanted to—usually when it came under intensive pressure from the United States or its neighbors. Preventing militants from crossing its 380-mile border with Iraq did, however, present problems even for a regime as notoriously security conscious and repressive as Syria. Even if Syria had the political will to completely and forcefully seal its border, it lacked sufficient resources to fund such an effort (Saudi Arabia spent over $1.2 billion in 2003–2004 alone to secure its border).

Syria, however, had considerable success simply by heavily screening those who entered the country. This method did present problems in establishing proof of residency in Syria, as well as the difficulties with verifying hotel reservations. According to the Minister of Tourism, roughly 3.1 million tourists visited the country in 2004; the number of Saudis alone who arrived in the first seven months of 2005 increased to 270,000 from 230,000 in the same period in 2004.[106]

Syria did seem to be able to act when it wanted to. There were even those who claimed the Syrian authorities were being *too* forceful in their crackdown on foreigners in the country. There were reports that Syria engaged in the systematic abuse, beating, and robbery of Saudi tourists, a charge that Syria denied. According to semi-official reports published in Saudi newspaper *Al Watan,* released prisoners alleged that Syrian authorities arbitrarily arrested Saudis on the grounds that they were attempting to infiltrate Iraq to carry out terrorist attacks.

The former detainees maintained that they were "targeted for arrest in Syria without any charges." They went on to say that "if they had intended to sneak into Iraq, Saudi authorities would have kept them in custody when they were handed over to that country." According to the Syrian Minister of Tourism, Saadallah Agha Kalaa, "no Saudi tourists have been harassed in Syria . . . Those who are spreading these rumors are seeking to harm Syria, which is a safe tourist destination."

There was no visa requirement for Arabs from some countries to enter Syria. Syria did, however, maintain a database of suspected militants, and several dozen Saudis were arrested at the border. However, pressuring the Syrians additionally to tighten security could be both unrealistic and politically sensitive.

As for the movement of fighters out of Syria, most militants leaving Syria to enter Iraq did so at a point just south of the mountainous Kurdish areas of the north, which was sparsely inhabited by nomadic Sunni Arab tribes, or due east from Dair Al-Zawr into Iraq's Anbar Province. Crossing near the southern portion of the border, which is mainly desert and was heavily occupied by Syrian and U.S. forces, was seldom done.

The crossing from Dair Al-Zawr Province was the preferred route through the summer of 2005 because the majority of the inhabitants on both sides of the border were sympathetic to the insurgency, the scattering of villages along the border provided ample opportunity for covert movement, and constant insurgent attacks in the area were thought to keep the U.S. forces otherwise occupied.

THE INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY PROBLEM

Sunni "nationalists" and Sunni Islamist extremists all posed acute security and counterintelligence (CI) problems for Coalition and Iraqi forces. The insurgents had good sources within the Iraqi Interim Government and forces, Iraqi society, and sometimes in local U.S. and Coalition commands. This was inevitable, and little could be done to stop it. Iraq simply lacked the resources and data to properly vet all of the people it recruited. U.S. officials believed the insurgent leadership was often so well informed by its intelligence network that it could stay ahead of U.S. and Iraqi forces, fleeing towns before Coalition forces arrived and slipping in and out of the country.[107]

There were good reasons for these intelligence and security problems. Many Iraqis worked only for the government or in the Iraqi forces because they could not find other employment. They may, in fact, quietly have sympathized with the insurgents. Workers in U.S. and government facilities, and in various aid and construction

projects, were even harder to vet. Men who did support the government were vulnerable to threats against their families, kidnappings, and murders of friends and relatives.

The end result was that the insurgents often had excellent intelligence from sources within the Iraqi government, Iraqi forces, the Iraqis supporting Coalition forces and government activities, and Iraqi industry. This enabled them to locate soft targets, hit at key points in terms of Iraq's economy and aid projects, and time their attacks to points of exceptional vulnerability. In practice, it also allowed them to pick weak and vulnerable elements of the Iraqi military, security, and police forces and often produced significant casualties. At the same time, in many areas they could use intimidation, threats, kidnappings, and selective murders and assassinations to paralyze or undercut Iraqi units. This meant a comparatively small number of core insurgents could bypass or attack the developing Iraqi forces with considerable success.

The insurgents could take advantage of reporting on the Internet, the steady growth of Iraqi media and near-real time news reporting, and other media coverage of the fighting, particularly Arab satellite television. This coverage often provided almost immediate feedback and a picture of what tactics and weapons worked, what had the most media and political impact, and what targets were vulnerable. This "Al Jazeera effect" substituted for many elements of a CI system. At the same time, confronting this confusing array of threats was made more difficult without general Iraqi loyalty and stand-alone Iraqi forces.

Some U.S. officials expressed frustration with the Iraqi government for failing to move quickly enough in developing its own intelligence agency. U.S. and Iraqi authorities worked together in a joint intelligence effort to capture former Ba'ath Party members, including Saddam Hussein. But according to U.S. officials, Baghdad was unable for some time to establish a network of local informants.[108]

U.S., allied, and Iraqi human intelligence steadily improved, but Coalition efforts were badly hurt by high turnover and rotations, poor allocation of human resources that sharply overstaffed some areas and understaffed some key links, overcompartmentalization, overreliance on contractors, and poorly designed and executed information technology and secure communications systems.

Most Iraqi forces and government intelligence sources serving the United States in hostile areas had quality and loyalty problems, while others either used their positions to settle scores or misinform Coalition troops. Training and equipment improved significantly over time. The October 2005 report to Congress showed the number of tips from Iraqi citizens had increased by more than sixfold from 483 in March 2005, 1,591 in April, 1,740 in May, 2,519 in June, 3,303 in July, 3,341 in August, to 4,749 in September.[109] Tips totaled 3,162 in October, 4,212 in November, and 3,840 in December.[110] Moreover, Coalition and Iraqi government vulnerability was unavoidable to some extent. Aid projects were easy to infiltrate and to target when nearing completion. Nongovernmental organization (NGO) or contractor headquarters were easily observable targets. Infrastructure and energy

facilities were typical targets that had long lines of pipes or wires and many vulnerable links.

The development of Iraqi intelligence was stalled by the Shi'ite militia infiltration into the Iraqi security forces, and particularly the police. The U.S. military continued to take most of the responsibility for intelligence as the civil conflict escalated. The trend toward full-scale civil war also made intelligence gathering more difficult, as growing numbers of Iraqis supported the various armed groups and fighters became impossible to distinguish among the population.

THE ONGOING ROLE OF CRIME AND CRIMINALS

There often was no reliable way to distinguish the insurgency from crime. The vast majority of Iraqi criminals early on in the war had limited or no ties to the insurgents. Even then, however, some were clearly "for hire" and were willing to take pay for sabotage or acts of violence that helped create a climate of violence in given areas.

At least some elements in the Sunni insurgency did work with criminal elements' looting and sabotage campaigns from mid-2003 onward. These clearly involved some native and foreign Sunni Islamist extremists—particularly in areas like kidnappings—but the alliances Ba'athists and Sunni "nationalists" had with criminal groups seemed to be much stronger. They also seemed to dominate the cases where tribal groups mixed insurgents and criminals.

By 2004, many U.S. and Iraqi intelligence officers believed that some criminal networks were heavily under the influence of various former regime elements and insurgents, or were dominated by them, and that some elements of organized crime did help the insurgency. The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency stated in July 2005 that some aspect of insurgent financing was derived from kidnapping for ransom, drug trafficking, robbery, theft, extortion, smuggling, and the counterfeiting of goods and currency.[111] Furthermore, at least some Shi'ite criminal groups and vendettas used the insurgency or Sunnis as a cover for their activities.

Crime affected intelligence gathering and security. Independent criminals, insurgents, and their criminal allies understood the limits of the Coalition's ability to cover the given areas and the Coalition's vulnerabilities. Many patterns of Coalition, Iraqi government, and Iraqi forces activity were easily observed and became predictable. Bases could often be observed and were vulnerable at their entrances to rocket and mortar attacks, and along their supply lines. There were many soft and relatively small isolated facilities.

The crime problem also affected Iraqi confidence in the government and its popular legitimacy. Far more Iraqis faced day-to-day threats from criminals than from terrorists and insurgents, although there was no area totally free from the risk of attack.

The Bush administration summarized the impact of crime in Iraq as follows in its October 13, 2005, report to the Congress on "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq." The report made it clear that corruption was in many ways as important a criminal activity as the threat outside government and that the development of an

effective judicial and police structure for dealing with crime was still in the initial stages of progress:

> The most obvious indicator of success in establishing rule of law in Iraq is probably the crime rate. Unfortunately, data on criminal activity in Iraq are unreliable. If such statistics become available, they will be included in future reports.
>
> All 869 judges in Iraq have been reviewed and 135 removed because of substantial evidence of corruption or Ba'ath Party affiliation. All Iraqi provincial criminal courts are also now operational, although the number of trials proceeding in these courts varies. In some areas, relatively few cases are tried. In general, the primary impediment to prosecuting more cases is the ability of police and prosecutors to collect evidence and prepare cases for trial. The Coalition has therefore trained 99 judicial investigators, who in Iraq assume some of the investigative duties performed by detectives in American police departments.
>
> Training of Iraqi judges is ongoing, with 351 Iraqi judges having received at least some training. The Coalition has also established a witness protection program and a judicial security program to protect judges and courthouses. In addition, the Coalition is engaged in ongoing efforts to build Iraqi prisons and train corrections officers and to encourage the Iraqi government to assume full responsibility for security internees.
>
> The Central Criminal Court of Iraq is the court that tries defendants accused of terrorism and crimes against the Coalition, among other crimes. Since its inception, it has conducted 544 trials and handed down 522 convictions. (Some of the trials involved multiple defendants.)
>
> The Iraqi Special Tribunal (IST) has begun the process of prosecuting Saddam Hussein and other top officials of his regime. Under the Iraqi system, a defendant is given a separate trial for each event that constitutes a crime. Saddam is therefore likely to face multiple, different trials. The first of these trials is currently scheduled to begin on October 19. The US Department of Justice–supported Regime Crimes Liaison Office continues to assist with preparing the IST, providing training and other support for IST attorneys and judges.[112]

It was still difficult, however, to do more than guess at the strength of individual criminal elements and the extent to which they were or were not tied to insurgent groups. The collapse of Saddam's regime, massive unemployment, the disbanding of a wide range of military and security elements, the destruction of Iraq's military industries, de-Ba'athification, and sheer opportunism all combined to make organized and violent crime an endemic part of Iraqi society even in many areas where the insurgents had little real strength. Criminals were also a powerful force behind local vigilante and militia efforts that at least indirectly challenged the legitimacy of the central government.

In any case, crime had virtually the same impact as sabotage even when there was no deliberate intent to support the insurgency. Acts like wire and equipment theft limited the government's ability to distribute electrical power and added to the image of ineffective governance. Similarly, oil and gas thefts added to Iraqi fuel problems and deprived the government of revenues. While most kidnappings were almost

certainly decoupled from any political motive, some may have been done for hire at the bidding of various insurgent groups.

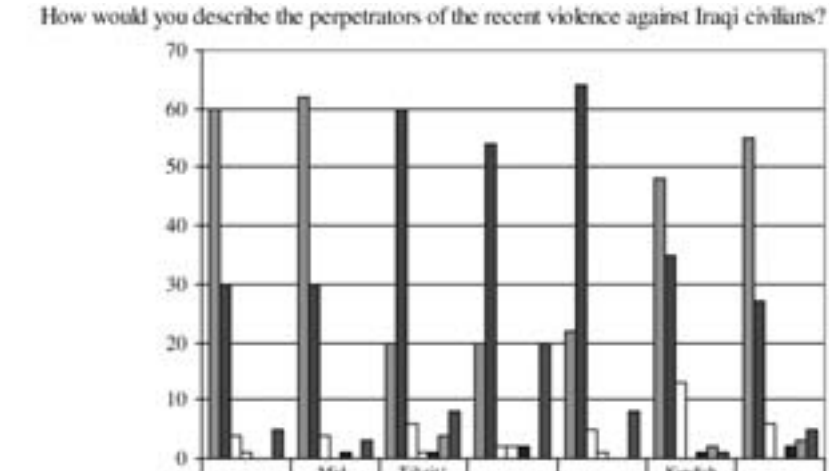
At best, the end result was a climate of cumulative violence, with some elements of Sunni versus Shi'ite tension. At worst, crime would vastly compound the government and Coalition security problems, offer insurgent groups yet another kind of informal network, help block investment and development, compound the problem of hiring security forces, and undermine legitimacy. The fact that the Ministry of Interior stopped reporting meaningful crime statistics in mid-2004 made trend analysis almost impossible.

It was also all too clear that the focus on defeating active insurgents had not been matched by similar efforts to develop effective police forces and prison system, eliminate corruption, create a working and efficient judicial system, or create an effective system for prosecution. The end result was that day-to-day security, even in areas without active insurgent activity, was often poor to nonexistent, dependent on local forces or militias, and/or dependent on bribes and protection money. This made it easier for insurgents to infiltrate, allowed them to become the *de facto* security force or intimidate the population in some Sunni areas, alienated some of the government's potential supporters, and led to widespread distrust of the police and criminal justice system. The situation had not been helped by the relatively limited staffing of the Ministry of the Interior, the Sunni perception that it was Shi'ite dominated, and the fact that the Coalition advisory effort remained limited and understaffed through October 1, 2005—when it was reorganized and put under the Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq.

IRAQI PUBLIC OPINION ON THE INSURGENCY IN 2005

Iraqi attitudes did not change markedly since 2004. Polling did, however, begin to ask serious questions about the insurgency and not simply about attitudes toward the new Iraqi government and the Coalition. While many aspects of the polling remained uncertain, the Department of State found in the fall of 2005 that Iraqis differed strikingly over their attitudes toward the insurgency depending on whether insurgent attacks struck at Coalition forces or Iraqi civilians.

- Figure 6.6 shows that Iraqis did not support insurgent attacks designed to provoke a civil war or attack Iraqi civilians. Shi'ites in southern and central Iraq tended to classify the perpetrators of violence as "terrorists." In the Sunni areas, such as Tikrit and Baquba, they were referred to as "criminals." Very few fighters in any of the areas were called "patriots." These results, however, show the sectarian divide on thinking about the violence. Sunni insurgents were generally synonymous with "terrorists" in the Shi'ite areas, while Sunnis saw them as more common criminals and not linked in a broader context. In the Kurdish areas almost an equal number of respondents saw the fighters as "terrorists" and "criminals." A significant number also referred to them as "mercenaries." These results show that insignificant numbers of Iraqis called the attackers "freedom fighters" or "patriots" and did not support insurgent attacks that sought to provoke civil war.



	South	Mid-Euphrates	Tikrit/ Baquba	Kirkuk	Mosul	Kurdish Areas	Baghdad
Terrorists	60	62	20	20	22	48	55
Criminals	30	30	60	54	64	35	27
Mercenaries	4	4	6	2	5	13	6
Patriots	1	0	1	2	1	0	0
Freedom Fighters	0	1	1	2	0	1	2
Other	0	0	4	0	0	2	3
Don't Know/No Answer	5	3	8	20	8	1	5

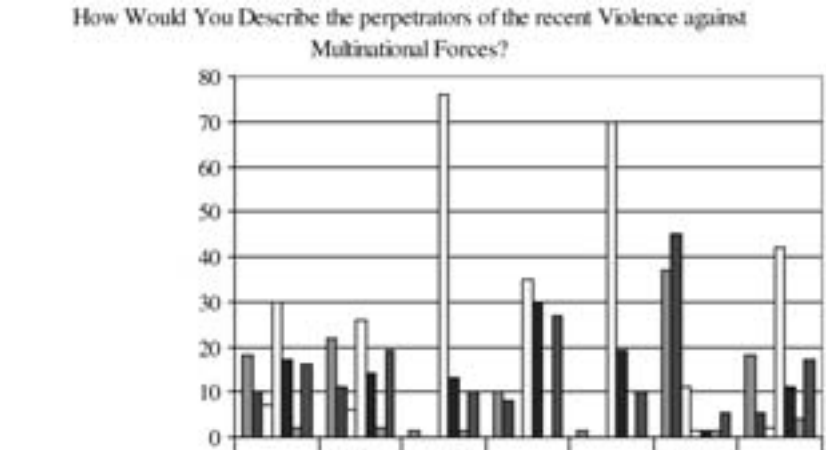
Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, February 2006, p. 32.

Note: Survey was conducted on October 24-27, 2005.

Figure 6.6 Iraqi Perceptions of Insurgents

- Figure 6.7 shows that Iraqis saw the perpetrators of violence against Coalition forces as "patriots." In the Shi'ite south, 30 percent saw the attacks as "patriots," 18 percent as "terrorists," and 17 percent as "freedom fighters." In contrast, in the Sunni areas of Tikrit/Baquba, 76 percent saw the fighters as "patriots." A similar result was found in Mosul. In the ethnically mixed area of Kirkuk, 35 percent saw the attackers of U.S. forces as "patriots" and 30 percent called them "freedom fighters." In ethnically mixed Baghdad, 42 percent called them "patriots" and 18 percent called them "terrorists." Unlike the insurgent attacks against Iraqis, large numbers of Iraqis clearly supported attacks against Coalition forces. These numbers fell slightly in the Shi'ite areas and dropped to very low percentages in the Kurdish north, but large numbers in mixed and Sunni areas clearly supported insurgent attacks against the Coalition.

The same report measured Iraqi confidence in the Iraqi security forces by region as of October and November. It focused on whether the individual polled would support or oppose himself or herself, or someone he or she knew, joining the Iraqi Army or police force. The results clearly showed deep sectarian and ethnic divisions. Shi'ite



	South	Mid-Euphrates	Tikrit/Baquba	Kirkuk	Mosul	Kurdish Areas	Baghdad
Terrorists	18	22	1	10	1	37	18
Criminals	10	11	0	8	0	45	5
Mercenaries	7	6	0	0	0	11	2
Patriots	30	26	76	35	70	1	42
Freedom Fighters	17	14	13	30	19	1	11
Other	2	2	1	0	0	1	4
Don't Know/No Answer	16	19	10	27	10	5	17

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, February 2006, p. 32.
Note: Survey was conducted on October 24-27, 2005.

Figure 6.7 Attacks against Coalition Forces

and Kurds generally supported the Iraqi security forces. Many in Sunni and mixed regions showed deep distrust.

THE COALITION AND IRAQI GOVERNMENT MILITARY RESPONSE TO THE SUNNI INSURGENCY

Ethnic and sectarian violence increased steadily during 2005, as many aspects of Sunni Islamist extremist activity became more intense and more focused on preventing the emergence of a successful Iraqi political process and driving the Shi'ite and Kurds toward civil war. Low-level violence and killings increased and provoked steadily growing Shi'ite reprisals. Elements of the police and Ministry of Interior special security forces, and the Badr Organization, increasingly killed or intimidated Shi'ites in reprisal for the rise in Sunni Islamist extremist attacks on Iraq civilians, Shi'ites and Kurds, and Iraqi politicians.

The Hunt for al-Qa'ida and al-Zarqawi

While U.S. claims about the importance of the killings and captures of senior al-Qa'ida leaders sometimes seemed exaggerated, there were many real successes. For example, Interim Prime Minister Allawi announced on January 10, 2005, that Izz al-Din al-Majid, a chief Zarqawi financier, was arrested in Fallujah in early December 2004. Al-Majid had more than $35 million in his bank accounts and controlled $2 billion to $7 billion of former regime assets stolen from Iraqi government accounts. His objective, according to interrogators, was to unite the insurgent groups Ansar al-Sunnah, Jaysh Muhammad, and the Islamic Resistance Army.

In July 2005, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers announced that the Coalition had captured long sought-after battlefield commander Abu 'Abd-al-Aziz. According to the U.S. military, al-Aziz had led a foreign fighter cell in Fallujah up until the United States took control of the city. Fleeing the city, al-Aziz apparently came to Baghdad and earned the moniker "the Emir of Baghdad" among fellow insurgents.[113]

Later in July, the U.S. military announced the capture of what was described as an al-Qa'ida commander and close confidant to al-Zarqawi. Khamis Farhan Khalaf Abd al-Fahdawi, or Abu Seba, was captured with approximately 30 other terrorist suspects. It was believed that Seba played a role in the murder of Egypt's ambassador and in the attacks on the Pakistani and Bahraini envoys. An Internet posting purportedly written by al-Zarqawi's group said that Seba was a low-level leader of a cell in Baghdad and that the U.S. forces were inventing ranks to portray an image of success in taking down the terrorist networks.[114]

Not long after, an Egyptian insurgent named Hamdi Tantawi was captured by Iraqi police in the town of Yusufiya, along with weaponry, computers, and money. It was believed that Tantawi financed insurgent operations and allegedly was a lieutenant to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the second most recognized international al-Qa'ida figure behind Osama bin Laden.

Further details were unavailable, and it was unclear whether Tantawi was operating independently or coordinating with al-Zawahiri and/or al-Zarqawi. If he were as close to al-Zawahiri as suggested by the press reports, it would suggest that the coordination between the old guard al-Qa'ida leadership and the al-Qa'ida in Iraq group was far closer than previously thought. It would also suggest that bin Laden and al-Zawahiri were perhaps not as hard pressed and on the run along the Afghan border with Pakistan as was largely assumed.

U.S. military spokesman Gen. Kevin Bergner told reporters on September 16, 2005, that joint operations between Iraqi and U.S. forces in northern Iraq had captured or killed 80 senior leaders since January.[115] In late September, the U.S. military announced it had killed two senior members of al-Zarqawi's group. Abu Nasir, believed to be al-Qa'ida in Iraq's leader in Karabilah, was killed near the border with Syria on September 27. Two days earlier, U.S. forces in Baghdad shot and killed Abdullah Najim Abdullah Mohamed al-Jawari, also known as Abu Azzam. Thought to be al-Qa'ida in Iraq's No. 2 man, Abu Azzam was the leader of the insurgency in

Iraq's Anbar Province. Recent improvements in U.S. human intelligence, improved technical intelligence, targeting of insurgents, and more developed informants are believed to have contributed to the success of the two operations.[116]

Around the same time, soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry from the 172nd Stryker Brigade, known as "2-1," captured more than 180 suspected terrorists. In late October, the 2-1 killed a terrorist cell leader and his assistant, crippling an al-Qa'ida terrorist cell in Mosul. The terrorists, identified as Nashwan Mijhim Muslet and Nahi Achmed Obeid Sultan, were killed during a raid on their safe house on October 22. Muslet and Sultan were behind at least three videotaped beheadings and had terrorized Mosul residents through roadblocks, extortion, and kidnappings.[117]

In early November, the U.S. military announced it had killed two regional terrorists in an operation in the town of Husaybah, on the Syrian border. According to a U.S. military press release, the two men, identified as Asadallah and Abu Zahra, were "key al-Qa'ida in Iraq terrorist leaders." The statement described the two men in the following way:

> Asadallah was a senior al Qa'ida in Iraq terrorist leader and foreign fighter facilitator in the Husaybah area. Asadallah commanded several terrorist and foreign fighter cells in the Husaybah, and al Waim region. Asadallah also coordinated the funneling and distribution of foreign fighters from Syria into the Husaybah area as well as their employment as suicide bombers. His foreign fighters were responsible for numerous suicide bombings in the region. He also directed, planned and executed many of the terrorist attacks on Iraqi security and coalition forces.
>
> Abu Zahra, a close associateof the current al Qa'ida in Iraq Emir of Husaybah. As a close personal friend and confident to the Emir of Husaybah he acted as an assistant, helping run the day to day activities of the terrorist organization. Zahra took an active role in planning and coordinating attacks against Iraqi security and Coalition forces. He additionally was reported to provide logistical support for various terrorist cells in the area. This support included providing weapons and ammunition, arranging housing, and money for foreign fighters and terrorists operating in the area.[118]

Also in November, U.S. officials reported that they had come close to capturing al-Zarqawi on at least three occasions. The military said it was using eavesdropping satellites, unmanned drones, and U-2 spy planes to gather intelligence on the insurgency and to track al-Zarqawi's movements. U.S. forces were also helping Iraqis in the intelligence process.[119]

On November 19, U.S. and Iraqi forces surrounded a two-story house in the mostly Kurdish area of eastern Mosul, after receiving intelligence that al-Zarqawi might be hiding there. Coalition troops encountered fierce resistance from the insurgents, heightening suspicion that a high-value target like al-Zarqawi was inside the house. Three of the eight insurgents killed during the three-hour raid blew themselves up rather than be captured alive. Immediately following the raid, U.S. forces sealed the house.

Speculation that al-Zarqawi might have been killed in the raid grew after Iraqi Foreign Minister Hohshyar Zebari told the Jordanian Petra news agency that DNA

tests were being carried out on the bodies. But the governor of Nineveh Province, Duraid Kashmoula, told the *Washington Post* on November 21 that there was only a 30-percent chance that one of the bodies was that of al-Zarqawi, adding, "We've had dry holes before."[120]

U.S. officials, however, remained cautious. On November 22, a top U.S. commander in Iraq said there was "absolutely no reason" to believe al-Zarqawi had died in the raid and Ambassador Khalilzad echoed that assessment, saying, "I do not believe that we got him. But his days are numbered. . . we're closer to the goal, but unfortunately we didn't get him in Mosul."[121] The following day, al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia issued a statement on an Islamic Web site denying its leader had been killed. The statement said the group had waited to respond to the rumors of al-Zarqawi's death "until this lie took its full length to let Muslims know the extent of [the media's] stupidity and shallow thinking."[122]

There may have been other near misses. According to a senior U.S. intelligence official, "Several times we have showed up at places where we know he was hours or days earlier. But the intelligence we get is never fresh enough." U.S. officials believe al-Zarqawi had slipped in and out of Iraq during the past few years, traveling to Jordan, Syria, and Iran to raise funds and recruits for the insurgency.[123]

In late November 2005, U.S. officials believed the best intelligence showed al-Zarqawi was operating in western Baghdad. But Iraq's Interior Minister Bayan Jabr told ABC News in mid-November that the Iraqi government had evidence that al-Zarqawi had been injured in Ramadi sometime in October or early November.[124] U.S. officials also reported that more and more Iraqis were coming forward with tips on his whereabouts following the November 9 bombings in Amman.[125] But while the military's elite Task Force 145 continued the more than two-year-old hunt of the elusive leader of the insurgency, the public disowning of al-Zarqawi by his own tribe after the November 9 bombings may have done more to hasten his downfall.

Major Offensives in Sunni Areas

The growth in insurgent activity forced Coalition and Iraqi forces to start a new series of offensives in the Sunni areas in Iraq. U.S. and a limited number of Iraqi forces launched a series of operations designed to deny insurgents a stronghold and secure the region in the run-up to the October 15 referendum on the new draft constitution. Most such operations were conducted in Al Anbar Province, and many near the Syrian border. Coalition operation forces ranged in size from several hundred to several thousand troops.

Some U.S. officials believed the insurgents had found their last foothold in the area along the border with Syria. In late summer 2005, there were reports that insurgents loyal to al-Zarqawi—or at least key Sunni Islamist extremist groups claiming some affiliation to al-Qa'ida—had taken over at least five Iraqi towns on the border with Syria. The insurgents, estimated to number between 300 and 400, were reported to be distributing "death letters" in which they ordered residents to leave their homes or face death.

According to Lt. Col. Julian Alford, Commander of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines Regiment stationed near Qaim, "It appears that al-Qa'ida in Iraq is kicking out local people from a lot of these towns out there."[126] U.S. forces in the region, numbering 1,000 at the time, estimated that as many as 100 families per day were fleeing their homes. Fighters loyal to al-Zarqawi had been in complete control of the area for at least a month. No Iraqi soldiers or police officers were believed to be operating inside the towns of Dulaym al Husayba, Karabila, Sada, and Al Ubaydi.[127]

In late September, the *Washington Post* reported that a gradual buildup of U.S. and Iraqi forces was under way in the Euphrates River valley. U.S. officials reported that the move was aimed at securing the border area around Qaim and suppressing other insurgency activity in the region.[128] The move appears to have been undertaken in preparation for Operation Al Hajip Elfulathi (Steel Curtain), launched in the western part of al-Anbar Province on November 5, 2005. Operation Steel Curtain, like Operations Iron Fist and River Gate before it, was part of the larger Operation Hunter. Steel Curtain involved 2,500 U.S. soldiers and 1,000 Iraqi Army soldiers and was designed to restore security along the Iraqi-Syrian border. Operation Steel Curtain concluded on November 22. During the 17-day operation, more than 139 terrorists were killed and 256 were detained.

Coalition and Iraqi efforts further intensified in the late fall of 2005, in response to both new increases in insurgent violence and as part of an effort to prepare for the election on December 15. Operation Iron Fist, Operation River Gate, and Steel Curtain were part of larger, ongoing operations, known as Operation Sayaid (Hunter), launched in mid-to-late summer 2005. The western part of Iraq's Al-Anbar Province was a key target because it had become a center of insurgent operations that had increasingly been driven westward.

The offensives continued until the December 15 elections. They involved a wide range of efforts to secure hostile towns and cities and interdict insurgent movements. In July, for example, an Army squadron of Stryker vehicles set up an outpost near the town of Rawah, as part of the first phase of the operation. More than 1,000 U.S. troops along with a battalion from the Iraqi Intervention Force cordoned off traffic in the area. In September, U.S. warplanes blew up two small bridges in the towns of Karabilah and New Ubaydi, forcing all traffic in the region to use the U.S.–controlled Rawah River crossing.[129]

Air Force Brig. Gen. C.D. Alston said in late December that these joint operations were one of several factors contributing to what he characterized as the diminishing capability of insurgents to sustain attacks. He stated this was a key measure of effectiveness studied by U.S. officials when evaluating the strength of the insurgency.[130] Yet, none of the data discussed earlier or later in this report show any such pattern. The Coalition offensives, and constant pressure from other attacks on the insurgents, certainly had a major impact in limiting what the insurgency could do. At the same time, most major insurgent groups and cells remained intact, and the offensives taught the insurgents how to disperse, be less vulnerable, and use other patterns of attack. They did not reduce the drift toward sectarian and ethnic conflict.

The United States also conducted offensives in northern Iraq. In early September 2005, U.S. and Iraqi forces began "Operation Restoring Rights" on the insurgent stronghold of Tal Afar. It was the largest to-date urban assault since Fallujah. Troops faced little resistance, suspecting that most insurgents fled the city during the preassault evacuation of civilians. The developments in the fight for Tal Afar had the following impact:

- One hundred fifty-seven terrorists were killed; 291 others were arrested. One Iraqi serviceman and six civilians were killed.
- In al-Sarai district of Tal Afar, explosives were planted in most of the houses, which led to the destruction of 10–12 houses in the area.
- Dozens of other houses were destroyed in the last three months during combat operations. The families that lost their homes will be paid U.S.$10,000–$15,000.
- Twenty trucks of supplies arrived in Tal Afar from Baghdad. Ten ambulances were sent from Mosul to the nearby town. About 1,000 tents were provided for the refugees who fled the town of Tal-Afar, and seven medical facilities were set up on the outskirts of the northern town.
- The Iraqi government said it would deploy peacekeeping forces into the town of Tal Afar after the combat operations in the region were over. In addition, it said that 1,000 residents of the town would be trained to maintain security and that tribes based in the area would also play a major role in maintaining security and stability.[131]

The end result, however, was simply another cycle in the violence. The debate over Iraq's new constitution and the October 15, 2005, referendum on the constitution made some political progress, but also divided Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Kurds over a host of issues including federation, the role of religion in the state, control of state revenues, and control of oil revenues.

The insurgents also learned how to cooperate more effectively in achieving these ends, particularly the more organized Islamist extremist elements. The major Sunni Islamist extremist groups formed a loose alliance and informal "majlis." They developed a more sophisticated military literature and a wide range of training aids. They began to post battle-by-battle summaries of the lessons to be learned from each major encounter with Coalition and Iraqi forces, analyses drawn from other conflicts, and various manuals. Videotapes and DVDs supplemented these efforts. While some remained basic, others became highly sophisticated—reflecting the growing military background and expertise of some of the insurgents involved.[132]

THE GROWING ROLE OF SHI'ITE VIOLENCE

As might be expected, all of these trends produced a hostile Shi'ite reaction and pushed Iraq toward civil conflict. The U.S. government and MNF-I continued to largely ignore the growing level of Shi'ite violence and sectarian and ethnic "cleansing." Official U.S. reporting on the effect of the insurgency on Shi'ites remained

dismal at best. In the fall of 2005, however, the Department of Defense noted the potential role of Shi'ite militias. The October "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report summarized the primary militias—the Badr Organization and the Mahdi Army—but downplayed their growing power among the Shi'ite population. The report also failed to recognize the effect of the continued insurgent attacks against Shi'ites and the growing risk of civil war.

The report summarized the role of Shi'ite militias as follows:

> More than a dozen militias have been documented in Iraq, varying in size from less than a hundred to tens of thousands of members. Some were organized in loose cellular structures, while others had a more conventional military organization. Some were concentrated around a single locale, while others had a more regional footprint. Some of them were wholly indigenous, while others received support such as training, equipment, and money from outside Iraq.
>
> Typically, the militias were armed with light weapons and operated as cells or small units. Even if they do not take up arms against the government, militias can pose a long-term challenge to the authority and sovereignty of the central government. This was the driving force behind the creation of Coalition Provisional Authority Order 91 and the Transition and Re-Integration Committee. For the same reason, Article 27 of the Transitional Administrative Law and Article 9 of the draft Iraqi Constitution prohibit armed forces or militias that are not part of the Iraqi Armed Forces.
>
> The realities of Iraq's political and security landscape work against completing the transition and re-integration of all Iraqi militias in the short-term. Provided the constitution is ratified in October, the government elected in December will have a four-year term of office, and it will have the task of executing the militia-control provisions of the constitution. Although it is often referred to as an Iraqi militia, the Jaysh al Mahdi (or "Mahdi Army") of radical Shia cleric Moqtada al Sadr fought Coalition Forces and Iraqi forces in April and August of 2004. The Peshmerga and the Badr Organization are viewed as militias by the Iraqi government and Coalition Forces, while the Mahdi Army is viewed as a potentially insurgent organization.
>
> - Badr Organization. Officially known as the Badr Organization for the Reconstruction and Development, it is the militia of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iran (SCIRI), the largest Shi'ite party in Iraq. It is reported to have links with both Iranian and Iraqi intelligence services and provides protective security for many Shi'ite religious sites as well as religious and secular leaders. Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani is protected by the Badr militia. The Badr Organization has been implicated in the revenge killings of Ba'athists and has also been involved in combat and street fighting with Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army.
> - Jaysh al Mahdi. The Mahdi Army of Moqtada al-Sadr engaged in open combat with Coalition and Iraqi forces in April and August of last year, most notably in the battles in and around Najaf. The Mahdi Army has continued to exist after an October 2004 ceasefire agreement, although the Iraqi government has made repeated calls for its disbandment. The exact size of the organization is unknown. There is evidence that they are supplied from sources outside of Iraq, most notably Iran.[133]

Insurgent Pressure on the Shi'ites to Move toward Civil War

Shi'ite militias played a role in Iraq's civil violence from 2003 onward. Former Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari said in January 2007 that Shi'ite militias had infiltrated security forces long before the mosque bombing and that top U.S. officials had ignored his warnings about the militias.[134]

The fact the Sunnis did not participate broadly in the January 30, 2005, election also gave them little stake in the new government and more reason to fear Shi'ite Arab and Kurdish power. After the election, much of the Sunni insurgent activity was directly targeted at Shi'ite clergy and political leaders, Shi'ite civilians, and Shi'ite institutions. Attacks also targeted key Shi'ite holidays like the February 19 Ashura holiday. While most Shi'ite leaders continued to resist calls for reprisals against Sunnis, other Shi'ites called for such action, and Shi'ite killings of Sunni clergy and civilians increased in 2005.[135]

These acts put more and more pressure on Shi'ite restraint. The single deadliest day to date for Iraqi Shi'ites was August 31, 2005, when almost 1,000 Shi'ite pilgrims were killed in a stampede in Baghdad. The pilgrims were crossing the al-Aima Bridge en route to the shrine of Moussa al-Kadhim when rumors began to spread that there were Sunni suicide bombers in their midst. The resulting panic ended in 953 Shi'ites dead, according to the Iraqi Ministry of Interior. Moqtada al-Sadr vowed vengeance against the Sunnis, whom he believed organized the pandemonium. Later in a sermon, al-Sadr spoke out against the Coalition's presence in Iraq, as it hampered a sectarian war, which he asserted had already begun.[136] Prior to the stampede, Moqtada al-Sadr had publicly opposed Shi'ite participation in sectarian warfare.

Things were made worse on September 14, 2005, when Iraq's al-Qa'ida leader and Sunni insurgent Abu Musab al-Zarqawi declared war on Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq, as described earlier. Baghdad erupted in violence following al-Zarqawi's declaration. Violence continued to escalate throughout September, with insurgents killing more than 100 Iraqi civilians on the last two days of the month alone in the predominantly Shi'ite town of Balad, in the Sunni region of Salah ad Din, north of Baghdad.[137] September 2005 was the bloodiest month up to that point in terms of multiple-fatality insurgent bombings, with 481 Iraqis killed and 1,074 wounded.[138]

The wave of deadly attacks launched by al-Zarqawi continued into October, and President Bush warned that the violence would further intensify in the run-up to the October 15 referendum and December elections.[139] As violence in Iraq increased in the fall of 2005, so too did the number of sectarian incidents. In one six-week period, more than 30 Iraqis died as part of sectarian attacks in the Ghazaliya neighborhood of Baghdad. Sectarian violence in Baghdad's mixed neighborhoods began accelerating sharply in the summer of 2005 and continued to do so throughout the fall. According to Iraqi government statistics, the number of sectarian targeted killings almost doubled in 2005, in spite of the increased presence of Iraqi security forces on the streets.[140]

In many cases, such as the Ghazaliya murders, the victims were randomly selected based on their religion and had little if any involvement in politics. The ongoing violence also caused many Iraqis to relocate to areas where they constituted the majority.

As in 2004, Shi'ite-Sunni violence continued during the holy month of Ramadan in 2005. On the first day of the month-long holiday, a suicide car bomber targeting a Ministry of Interior official blew himself up outside Baghdad's Green Zone, wounding several civilians.[141] That same day, an Internet message posted by al-Qa'ida in Iraq called for additional attacks during the holy month as well as a boycott of the October 15 referendum. The following day, October 5, a suicide car bomb exploded outside the Husseiniyat Ibn al-Nama mosque in Hillah as Shi'ite worshippers gathered to pray, killing at least 24 and wounding several dozen.[142]

The Resurgence of al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army

These tensions and attacks also played into the hands of Shi'ite extremists and hard-liners like al-Sadr. Al-Sadr was able to exploit the political weakness and divisions of other Shi'ite movements in the south and their lack of ability to govern, as well as the fact other hard-line Islamist movements won significant numbers of seats in local governments in key areas like Basra.[143]

Gen. John Abizaid remarked in March 2005, "We have not seen the end of Moqtada Sadr's challenge."[144] Although Iraqi government forces moved into the area, al-Sadr's movement still played a major political role in Sadr City in Baghdad and remained active in poorer Shi'ite areas throughout the country.

Al-Sadr's supporters sponsored demonstrations calling for U.S. forces to leave Iraq in April 2005, and top al-Sadr aides in his Independent National Bloc issued warnings to Ibrahim al-Jaafari, then the prime minister designate, that he must pay more attention to these demands or that the Sadr faction might leave the United Iraqi Alliance and become an active part of the opposition. The group also demanded the release of some 200 Sadr activists arrested during earlier fighting and that all criminal charges against al-Sadr be dropped.[145]

By the late spring of 2005, the Mahdi Army seemed to be the largest independent force in Basra; it played a major role in policing Amara and had effectively struck a bargain with the government police in Nasiriyah that allowed it to operate in part of the city. By the late fall of 2005, some sources estimated that some 90 percent of the 35,000 police in northeast Baghdad had ties to al-Sadr and the Mahdi forces. They were reported to be playing a major role in pushing Sunnis out of Shi'ite neighborhoods.[146]

Unlike most militias, the Mahdi Army had the active participation of Shi'ite clergy, mostly "activists" who strongly supported al-Sadr. One reason for their rebirth was the lack of effective action by the government. For example, the government police in Nasiriyah had 5,500 men, but was 2,500 men short of its goal.[147] In August 2005, Basra Police Chief Hassam Sawadi said that he had lost control over three-quarters of his police force and that men in his ranks were using their power to assassinate opponents.[148]

Al-Sadr remained publicly supportive of the political process in Iraq and urged Shi'ites to avoid sectarian fighting with the Sunni population. At the same time, his organization was accused of a rash of political assassinations and kidnappings in the Shi'ite south in the summer of 2005. On August 24, 2005, an attack on al-Sadr's office in Najaf led to unrest among Shi'ite populations there and in other cities. Al-Sadr's movement also began to publicly reassert itself in late summer of 2005, capitalizing on the release of Hazem Araji and other Sadr leaders from prison.

Also in the summer of 2005, al-Sadr attempted to collect 1 million signatures on a petition that asked the Coalition to leave Iraq in what appeared to be his burgeoning attempts to recast himself as a major political force within Iraq. Al-Sadr revived the Mahdi Army, which began to be openly active in parts of southern Iraq such as Basra, Amarah, and Nasiriyah, and still had cells in Najaf and Qut as well. While some U.S. official sources stated the army was relatively weak, it began to hold parades again. While only limited numbers of arms were displayed, it was clear that such weapons were still available in the places where they had been hidden during the fighting the previous year.[149]

His organization staged several large demonstrations as a show of strength. In mid-September, militiamen from the Mahdi Army in Basra directly engaged in battles against U.S. and British troops. Shoot-outs between supporters of al-Sadr and Coalition forces also erupted in Sadr City during the last week in September. On October 27, members of the Mahdi Army clashed with Sunni gunmen outside of Baghdad. The fighting, which occurred in the village of Bismaya in the Nahrawan area south of Baghdad, claimed more than 30 lives.[150] The militia battles in October proved to be the deadliest in months.

Al-Sadr did, however, continue to call for calm and continued his public support of nonreprisal. He sided with antifederalist Sunni leaders during the drafting and review of the Iraqi constitution.[151] He also supported continued Shi'ite political involvement in the new government, although many feared that he eventually wanted to see a more fundamentalist government in control of Iraq.

Internal Shi'ite Divisions

Shi'ite versus Shi'ite divisions became steadily more intense, particularly in southern Iraq. Basra was effectively taken over by a local government after the January 30, 2005, election that was much more of a Shi'ite fundamentalist government than the mainstream parties like Al-Da'wa or SCIRI. The local police were intimidated or pushed aside by such elements in May, and Shi'ite militia joined the police and dominated its ranks.

While some of those accused of being involved—such as Police Chief Lt. Col. Salam Badran—were affiliated with SCIRI in the past, most such "Islamists" seemed more fundamentalist than SCIRI's leadership. There were reports of threats, beatings, and killings affecting liquor stores, male doctors who treat women, and even barbers cutting hair in "non-Islamic" ways.

Al-Sadr's Council for Vice and Virtue launched at least one attack on secular students in Basra for having a mixed picnic.[152] Even if such cases do not divide Iraq's Arab Shi'ites—and serious issues do exist about how "Islamic" the future government should be in Shi'ite terms and who should rule—they caused even greater fear among Sunnis and increased the risk of civil conflict.[153]

THE KURDISH QUESTION

The January 2005 elections made the Kurds far more powerful relative to other Iraqi factions in military and security terms than their estimated 15 percent of Iraq's population justified. Iraqi security and stability depended on finding a power-sharing arrangement that gave the Kurds incentives to be part of the political process just as much as it did on developing such arrangements for the Arab Sunnis.

There was no basic political or economic reason such a compromise could not be found. Unfortunately, however, Iraq had a long history of not finding such compromises on a lasting basis, and Saddam Hussein's legacy left many areas where Kurds were forcibly expelled and Sunni Arabs and minorities were given their homes and property.

Large numbers of Kurds favored independence over political inclusiveness. This helped explain why the Kurdish turnout in the October referendum on the constitution varied widely. In predominantly Kurdish provinces, participation was much lower than in the January election. Some analysts suggested the lower turnout was a result of increased voter apathy among a Kurdish population that felt assured the constitution would pass.

Others noted the increase in dissatisfaction with the central government and the idea of remaining in Iraq among Kurdish populations. Riots and demonstrations protesting the shortages of gas, fuel, and power became more common in Kurdish cities.[154] Some Kurds also felt let down by an interim constitution (TAL) that did not include Kirkuk in Kurdistan and that failed to address oil contracts.[155]

Tensions between the Kurds and Other Iraqis

There were serious tensions among the Kurds, the Turkomans, and Assyrian Christians, as well as between Kurds and Arabs. At a local level, there were many small tribal elements, as well as numerous "bodyguards," and long histories of tensions and feuds. Even if Iraq never divided along national fracture lines, some form of regional or local violence was all too possible.

Insurgent activity in the Kurdish areas was particularly intense in the city of Irbil, which had been the site of several suicide bombings. In the summer of 2005, Kurdish security officials and the KDP intelligence service announced the arrest of approximately six insurgent suspects who, the authorities believed, came from six separate and previously unheard of militant organizations. The head of the Irbil security police, Abdulla Ali, stated that there was evidence that the groups had links to international terror groups, established jihadist groups in Iraq like Ansar

al-Sunnah, and even had links to intelligence services from nearby countries.[156] This evidence was not made public, but the Kurdish authorities stated that it appeared as though various groups were working together and that, to the anger and disappointment of the Kurdish authorities, local Kurds were assisting them.

The Issue of Kirkuk

Tension between the Kurds and the Iraqi Arabs and other minorities was also critical in areas like Kirkuk and Mosul. The Kurds claimed territory claimed by other Iraqi ethnic groups and demanded the return of property they asserted was seized by Saddam Hussein during his various efforts at ethnic cleansing from 1975 to 2003.

The Kurds stated that over 220,000 Kurds were driven out of their homes by Saddam in the 1970s and fighting in the Gulf War and that over 120,000 Arabs were imported into "Kurdish territory." The Kurds saw control of Kirkuk as their one chance to have territorial control over a major portion of Iraq's oil reserves, but Kirkuk was roughly 35 percent Kurd, 35 percent Arab, 26 percent Turkoman, and 4 percent other in 2005. This made any such solution almost impossible unless it involved violent means.

The end result was armed violence between the Kurds and the Arabs and Turkomans, as well as struggles over "soft" ethnic cleansing in the north. Many experts felt that the only reason Kirkuk had been relatively peaceful in the early years of the war was that the Kurds had not been strong enough relative to the other factions in the city to impose their will by intimidation or force.

Reports in August 2005 indicated that government police and military forces in the Kurdish north were using their power to intimidate Arabs through abductions and assassinations. Such activity posed the threat of deepening regional fissures. Likewise, the misuse of power by Coalition-sponsored forces could deepen resentment toward Coalition forces, particularly among the Sunni population.[157]

Other Kurdish actions exacerbated ethnic tension in a struggle for the control of Kirkuk. There were reports that the KDP and the PUK systematically kidnapped hundreds of Arabs and Turkomans from the city and transported them to prisons in established Kurdish territory in an apparent bid to create an overwhelming Kurdish majority.[158] This activity allegedly spread to Mosul as well. While some of the abductions had occurred in 2004, reports indicated that there was a renewed effort following the January 30 elections that solidified the two parties' primacy in the Kurdish areas.

According to a leaked Department of State cable in mid-June 2005, the abducted were taken to KDP and PUK intelligence-run prisons in Irbil and Sulaymaniyah without the knowledge of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MOD) or the Ministry of Interior, but sometimes with U.S. knowledge. In fact, the Emergency Services Unit, a special Kirkuk force within the police, was closely tied to the U.S. military and implicated in many of the abductions, along with the Asayesh Kurdish intelligence service.[159] It should be noted that the head of the Emergency Services Unit was a former PUK fighter.

Kirkuk Province's Kurdish governor, Abdul Rahman Mustafa, stated that the allegations were false. However, the Department of State cable indicated that the U.S. 116 Brigade Combat Team had known about the activity and had asked the Kurdish parties to stop.[160] According to Kirkuk's chief of police, Gen. Turhan Yusuf Abdel-Rahman, 40 percent of his 6,120 officers probably assisted in the abductions, disobeying his orders and following the directives of the KDP and PUK instead. Abdel-Rahman stated, "The main problem is that the loyalty of the police is to the parties and not the police force. They'll obey the parties' orders and disobey us."[161] According to Abdel-Rahman, the provincial police director, Sherko Shakir Hakim, refused to retire as ordered by the government in Baghdad once he was assured that the KDP and the PUK would continue to pay him if he stayed on. The various factions in Kirkuk seem to have agreed on a compromise local government in June 2005, but the city continued to present a serious risk of future conflict.

The Problem of Turkey

All these problems were further compounded by the rebirth of the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey and by acute Turkish pressure on the Iraqi government, the Iraqi Kurds, and the MNF-I to deny Kurdish insurgents a sanctuary and set any example that would encourage Kurdish separatism in Turkey. The Turkish Kurdish Worker Party (PKK) was a movement that has often used northern Iraq as a sanctuary and which led to several major division-sized Turkish military movements into the area under Saddam Hussein. While estimates were uncertain, some 6,000 PKK forces seemed to be in Iraq in the spring of 2005, with another 2,000 across the border.[162] These same factors help explain why Turkey actively supported Iraq's small Turkoman minority in its power struggles with Iraq's Kurds.

SHI'ITE AND KURDISH INFILTRATION INTO IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

Shi'ites and Kurds saw their militias as an important aid in fighting the insurgency. In contrast, Sunnis accused the militias—particularly the Badr Organization, the Mahdi Army, and police and elements of the special security forces dominated by these militias—of killings, intimidation, and a host of other crimes. This dichotomy led to steadily rising tensions and divisions between Sunnis and Shi'ites over the level of Shi'ite militia infiltration into government security forces and the role that they played in the sectarian conflict.

A report by the Inspector General of the Department of State and the Inspector General of the Department of Defense noted the following as of late April 2005:

> The International Police Liaison Officers' (IPLOs) daily reports chronicle disturbing accounts of instances in which IPS personnel are not professional in the performance of their duties. There are frequent reports of breakdowns in discipline, feuds among

> police units, and prisoner abuse. In the absence of viable tracking systems, the IG [Inspector General] Team is not able to determine whether or to what degree Coalition-trained police may be perpetrators of such actions. The failure to impose proper discipline rests with IPS leaders (some of whom have been directly, even violently, involved in the unseemly questionable incidents). The examples set by poor leaders for Coalition-trained personnel (mostly new recruits) bode ill.[163]

The militias were supposed to have been abolished under the guidelines set out by the Coalition Provisional Authority in the interim government. In early June 2005, Prime Minister al-Jaafari held a press conference in which he lauded the Kurdish Peshmerga and the Badr Organization. Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, joined the prime minister as well as the founder of the Badr Organization and SCIRI head, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, at Hakim's headquarters to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the Badr group.[164]

The president applauded what he, and presumably al-Jaafari, viewed as the militias' positive contributions to Iraq. Talabani stated, "[The Badr Organization] and the Peshmerga are wanted and are important to fulfilling this sacred task, to establishing a democratic, federal and independent Iraq."[165] Addressing a variety of allegations against the two militias, Talabani remarked, "It [Badr Organization] is a patriotic group that works for Iraq's interest and it will not be dragged into sectarian or any other kind of struggle."[166] Al-Jaafari went on to dub the Badr Organization a "shield" protecting Iraq.

The police expanded from some 31,000 men in July 2004 to nearly 95,000 in July 2005, sometimes with only limited background checks. In the process, substantial numbers of men from both the Badr Organization and Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army joined the force. In the case of the roughly 65,000 strong mix of Ministry of Interior (MOI) and police forces in the greater Baghdad area, the men from the Bader Organization generally tended to go into the MOI special security units and those from the Mahdi Army tended to join the police.[167]

By late 2005, U.S. officials and military sources were openly complaining that the MOI and Minister Jabr were not informing them of some MOI and police operations and privately acknowledged that they had observed prisoner abuse. Commenting on the futility of filing reports against the incidents, one U.S. official equated it with "trying to put out a forest fire with a bucket of water."[168]

They expressed particular concern about the actions of the MOI's Maghawir or Fearless Warrior special commando units and that they were carrying out illegal raids and killings. This 12,000-man force had a number of Sunni officers and had originally been formed under the authority of former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. Since the new government was formed in April 2005, however, it had recruited larger numbers of new Shi'ite members. Its commander, General Rashid Flaih Mohammed, was reported to have acknowledged that the unit had had some problems. Sunni police commanders like Brig. Gen. Mohammed Azzawi Hussein Alwan, commander of the Farook Brigade, were also purged from the MOI forces, along with junior officers.[169]

The discovery of some 200 Sunnis held in horrible conditions in a bunker in Baghdad in November 2005 raised further issues. Many were tortured, and the Special Investigative Unit carrying out the detentions was an MOI unit run by an MOI brigadier general and colonel. The colonel was an intelligence officer said to be reporting directly to then Interior Minister Jabr.

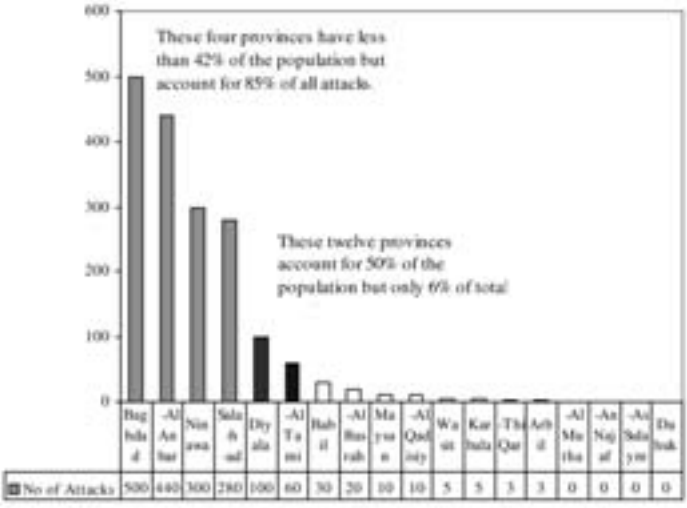
ATTACK AND CASUALTY PATTERNS IN 2005

The Coalition and U.S. attack counts confirmed the fact that insurgent activity surged before the January 30, 2005, elections, temporarily eased back, and then surged again—rather than diminishing in any lasting way. An internal U.S. Army analysis in April 2005 calculated that the apparent shift was more a shift in focus to more vulnerable non-U.S. targets than an actual drop in incidents.[170] Similarly, a study by the National Intelligence Council in the CIA that was leaked to *Newsweek* concluded that U.S. government reporting had so many conflicting sources and methods of analysis that the resulting metrics could not be trusted and that there was inadequate evidence to support any conclusions about whether the insurgents were being defeated.[171]

However, U.S. government sources reported that the average number of attacks per month in the Coalition count (which tended to undercount attacks on Iraqi civilians) had risen from an average of around 750 in late 2004 to a peak of nearly 3,000 in October 2005 and was 2,500 in December 2005. The average had been well over 2,000 per month from April 2004 onward.[172]

- Figure 6.8 shows that more than 80 percent of all attacks consistently occurred in only four provinces, although they are home to some 42 percent of the population. Its main base has been Al Anbar Province and a relatively limited number of towns and small cities in the west. If one considers only the hard-core Sunni insurgent areas in western Iraq, they probably have only about 6–8 percent of Iraq's total population.[173]
- Figure 6.9 shows the trend measured by a different standard: total attacks and effective attacks. It provides a much clearer picture of the intensity of the war and how sharp the cycles are in attempted attacks over time. At the same time, there is often surprisingly little correlation between attempted and effective attacks. The cycles in attempted attacks are much smaller and the trends are largely meaningless. The level of effective attacks is nearly constant from April 2005 through the end of 2005.
- Figure 6.10 shows average weekly attacks by political period.

What is striking about the data in the figures is that the worst violence was highly sectarian and affected Sunni Arab areas far more than Arab Shi'ite and Kurdish areas. At the same time, election, and "democracy," had no meaningful stabilizing effect in reducing violence, and attacks produced steadily more Iraqi casualties. Violence did not yet have a permeating civil dimension, but the trend toward civil conflict was clearly growing.



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Quarterly Report to Congress, Department of Defense, October 13, 2005, p. 21-22, available at www.defenselink.mil

Note: Data points are estimates from above-mentioned report.

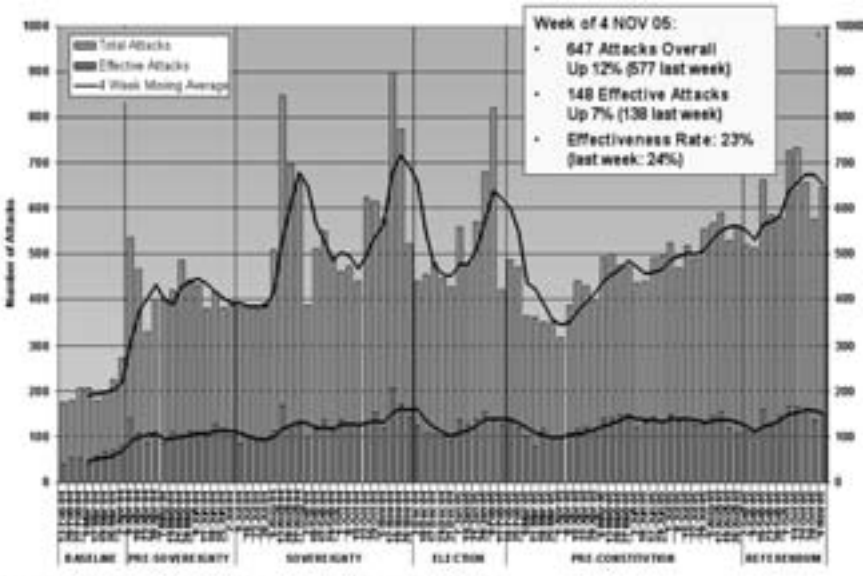
Figure 6.8 The Regional and Sectarian Nature of the Fighting, Total Attacks by Province: August 29–September 16, 2005

While the insurgents focused more on Iraqi targets, and increasingly on Shi'ite and Kurdish targets that might help provoke a major civil war, the attacks on MNF-I forces climbed from 40 a day in March to 55 in April, far below the peak of 130 a day before the January 30, 2005, elections—but it was scarcely reassuring.[174] The good news for the United States was that only 146 Americans died during the three-month period from February 1 to April 30, 2005, versus 315 in the pervious three-month period.[175]

The difficulty in analyzing the patterns in a constantly changing situation is illustrated by another surge in activity that took place as the new government was appointed. The Iraqi government announced most of its appointments on April 28, 2005—some three months after the election and months after the supposed deadline for doing so.

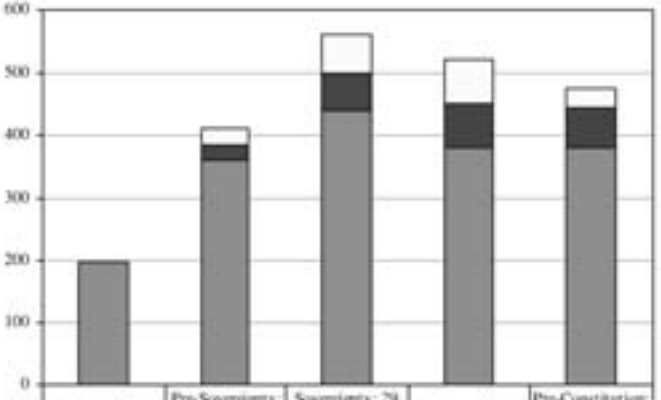
In the week that followed (April 28–May 6), there were 10 major suicide bombings and 35 major attacks. Insurgents killed more than 270 Iraqi civilians, and at least 14 bodies were found in a Baghdad garbage dump that may have been from previous attacks. Many of the attacks were against Iraqi forces and recruits, and the intensity of the attacks is indicated by the fact that a suicide bomber from the "Army of Ansar al-Sunna" killed more than 60 people in the Kurdish city of Irbil in northern Iraq in a single attack.[176]

These developments led some U.S. officers and officials to claim that the insurgents were lashing out because they had taken so many casualties that they were



Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News.

Figure 6.9 Total Average Weekly Attacks versus Effective Attacks by Time Period: February 2004–November 2005



	Baseline: 1 Jan 04-31 Mar 04	Pre-Sovereignty: 1 Apr 04-28 Jun 04	Sovereignty: 29 Jun 04-26 Nov 04	Election: 27 Nov 04-11 Feb 05	Pre-Constitution: 12 Feb 05-28 Aug 05
Attacks targeting civilians	-	25	60	70	30
Attacks targeting Iraqi forces	-	25	60	70	65
Attacks targeting Coalition	197	360	440	380	380

Source: Material adapted from "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Quarterly Report to Congress, Department of Defense, March 2007, pp. 19, available at: www.defenselink.mil.

*Note: Data points are estimates from above-mentioned report.

Figure 6.10 Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004–August 2005

desperate and/or to say that the successful car bombings by Islamic extremists had little strategic meaning since they alienated the Iraqi people and could easily be carried out by a small number of largely foreign volunteers who were not representative of Iraqi Sunnis.

Such arguments could not be disproved or proved at the time, but they were made during a period when the U.S. Marines found it necessary to conduct a major offensive along the Euphrates from Haditha to the Syrian border, the largest offensive since the attack on Fallujah. U.S. forces also had to launch another major operation to secure the area south and west of Baghdad and follow them up with a series of major campaigns around Mosul and in western Iraq during the summer and fall.[177]

These operations had to be followed up again and again, largely because many of the insurgents could disperse the moment they came under pressure. Also, the Coalition and Iraqi forces both lacked the manpower to occupy high-threat areas and the requisite Coalition or Iraqi government teams to back up tactical victories with civic action programs and efforts to establish effective governance.

The insurgents and terrorists continued to try to strip the new government of its perceived legitimacy. In spite of MNF-I estimates that some 1,000–3,000 insurgents were being killed and captured each month, attacks on Iraqi security forces and government officials continued, and the number of suicide bombings continued to mount.

Improvised Explosive Devise (IED), Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devise (VBIED), and Suicide Bombing Attacks

The patterns of conflict were changing and intensifying. According to U.S. Central Command, IED attacks nearly doubled between 2004 and 2005, rising from 5,607 to 10,953.[178] The number of IEDs detonated versus the number removed is compared for 2004 and 2005 in Figure 6.11. Figures 6.12 and 6.13 show the patterns in VBIEDs and suicide bombings, respectively. Figure 6.14 shows the number of car bombs intercepted and defused.

If one looks at data from other sources, the number of car bombings rose from 65 in February 2005 to 170 in April, and the total number of major attacks per day rose from 30–40 in February and March to 70 in April and May. There were 21 car bombings in Baghdad alone during the first two weeks of May, and 126 in the 80 days before May 18. This compared with 25 during all of 2004. Daily attacks had averaged 30–40 a day in February, but were at least 70 a day in June.[179] Although the number of car bombings decreased from April to July 2005 (from April's high of 170 car bombings, the number fell to 151 in May; 133 in June; and less than 100 in July) at the time, experts believed this was merely al-Qa'ida "storing up" for the late summer and fall offensive.[180]

The intensity of the attacks also increased as more suicide bombings took place by Islamist extremists—many conducted by young men from countries such as Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the Sudan who infiltrated in from across the Syria border—and most targeted Iraqi forces and civilians. The number of major attacks involving

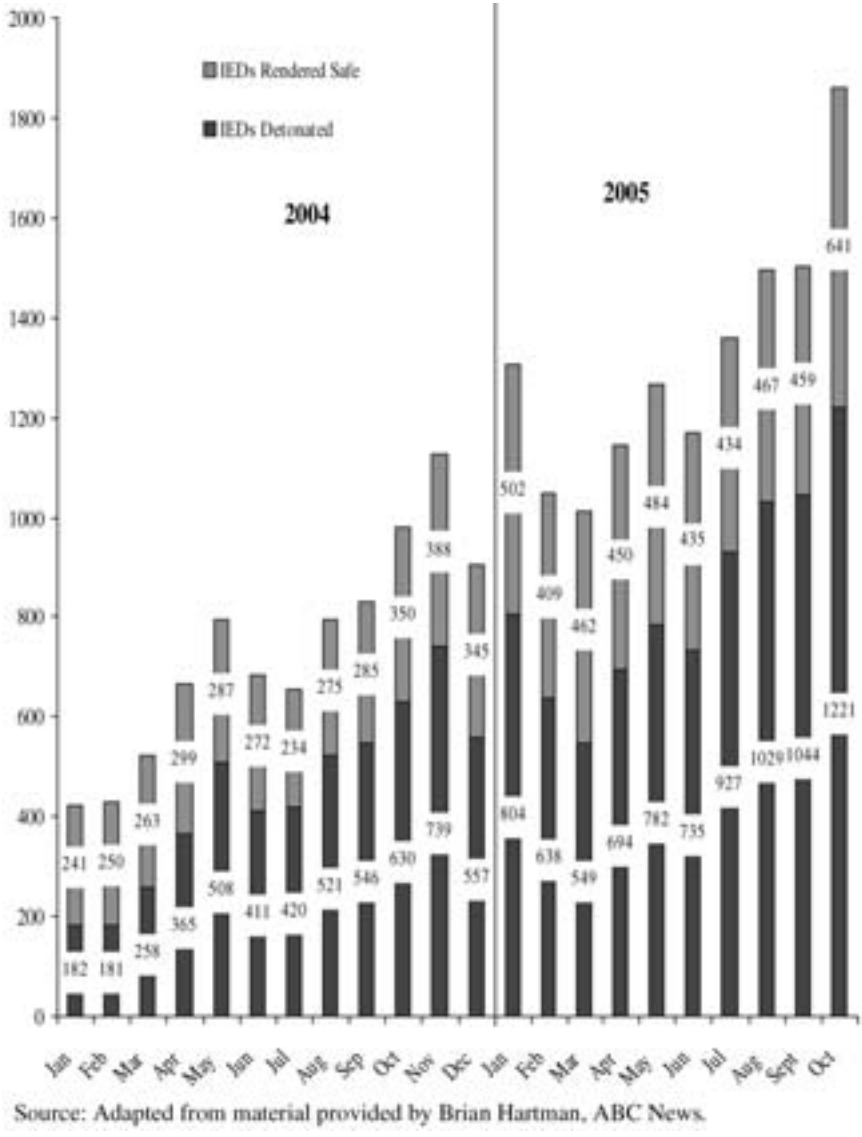
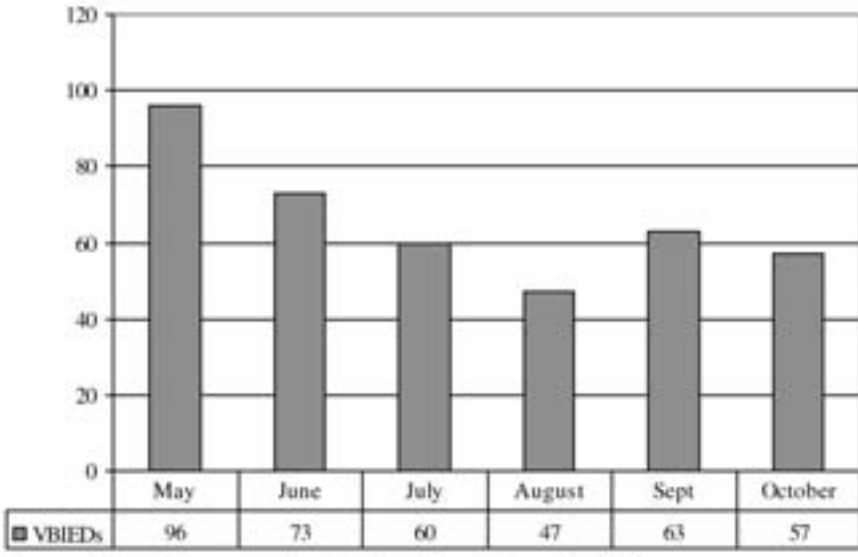


Figure 6.11 Patterns of IED Attacks: January 2004 to October 2005

suicide bombers rose from 25 percent in February to a little over 50 percent in April. More than 50 percent of the car bombings were suicide attacks in April.[181] There were 69 suicide bombings in April 2005, more than in the entire period from the fall of Saddam Hussein to the transfer of power in June 2004. In May, some 90 suicide bombings were the primary cause of some 750 casualties that month.[182] The annual pattern was equally serious. If one counts only car bombings, there had been more



Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News.

Figure 6.12 Patterns in VBIEDs: May–October 2005

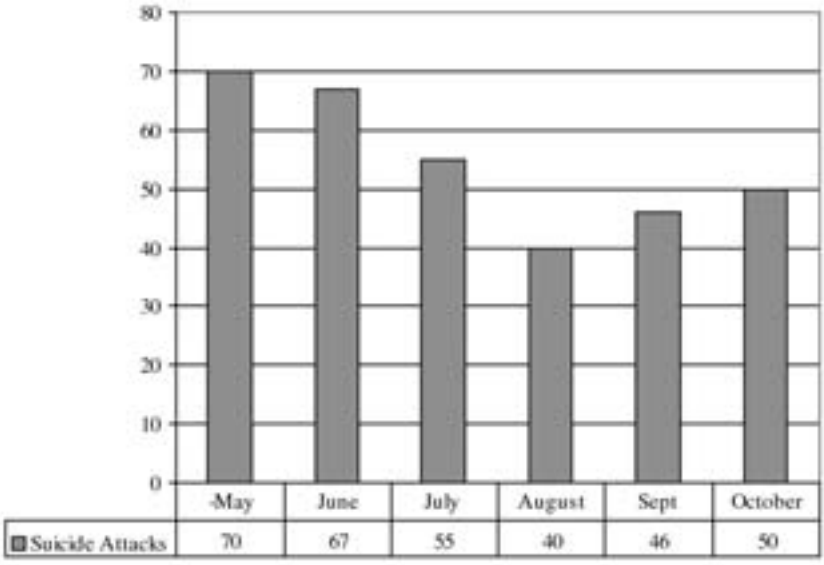
than 482 successful bombings in the year since the handover of power on June 26, 2004, killing at least 2,176 people and wounding at least 5,536.[183]

Similar cycles occurred during the rest of year. Coalition reporting in December 2005 showed a drop in the number of suicide bombings from 70 in May to 40 in August, a rise to 50 in October, and then a drop to 23 in November. The number of bombs exploded or cleared rose from 1,170 in June to 1,869 in October and then dropped to 1,330 roadside bombings and 68 car bombings in November.

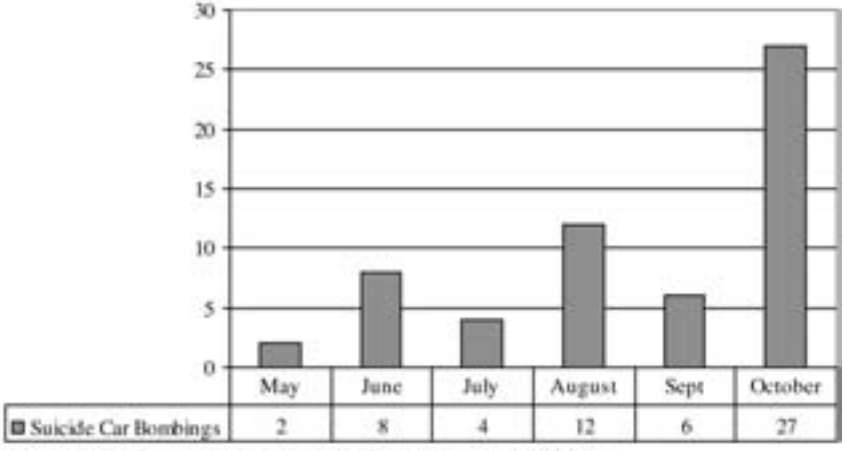
Infrastructure Attacks

Insurgents attacks on infrastructure scarcely paralyzed the country, but had notable successes in many areas. These included significant attacks on oil export facilities, water plants, and power. Because of the technological expertise involved in these attacks, some experts believed that former Hussein-era officials were still aiding the sabotage efforts—although others felt that by this time, there was a large pool of such expertise in the various insurgent forces.[184] A summary of infrastructure attacks through the war is provided in Figures 6.15 and 6.16.

Insurgents carried out more than 300 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities between March 2003 and January 2006. The end result was that oil production dropped by 8 percent in 2005, and pipeline shipments through the Iraqi northern pipeline to Ceyhan in Turkey dropped from 800,000 barrels per day before the war to an average of 40,000 barrels per day in 2005. In July 2005, Iraqi officials estimated that insurgent



Suicide Car Bombings in 2005

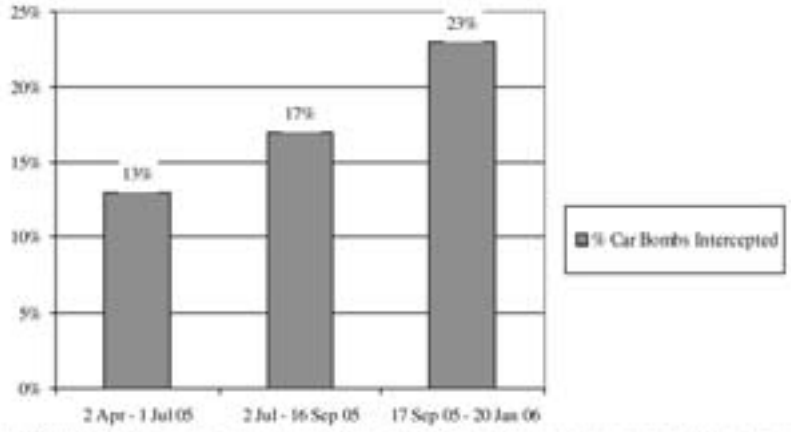


Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News.

Figure 6.13 Patterns Suicide Bombings: May–October 2005

attacks had already cost Iraq some $11 billion. They had kept Iraqi oil production from approaching the 3 million barrel a day goal in 2005 that the Coalition had set after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

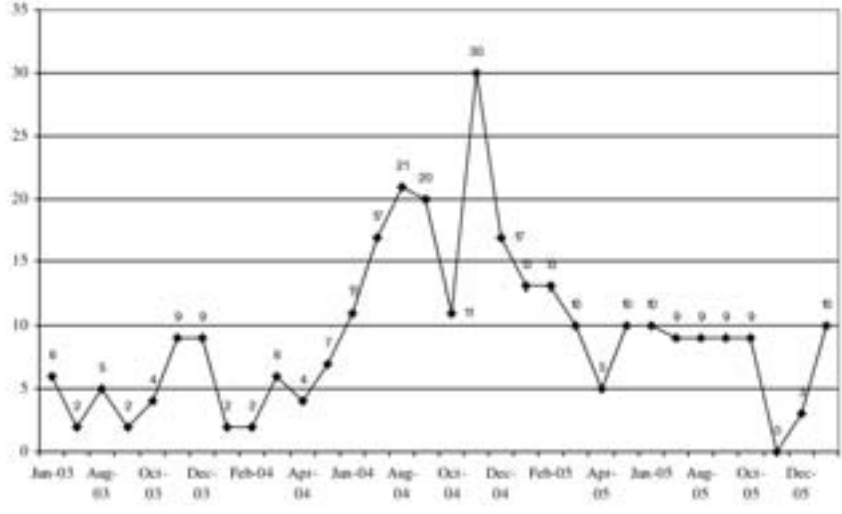
Production dropped from prewar levels of around 2.5 million barrels a day to an average of 1.83 million barrels a day in 2005, and a level of only 1.57 million barrels



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," February 2006, Report to Congress In accordance with the Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2006 (Section 9010), p. 28.

Figure 6.14 Percent of Car Bombs Intercepted/Defused: April 2005–January 2006

a day in December 2005.[185] In a report to Congress, the Department of Defense stated that oil production and exports fell from an average of 2.1 and 1.4 million barrels per day in October 2005, to 1.9 and 1.2 million barrels per day in January 2006, respectively. The same report cited sabotage as one of several factors contributing to the continuing difficulty in delivering adequate electrical power to Iraqis.[186]



Source: Adapted from material provided by "Iraqi Pipeline Watch," Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, http://www.iags.org/iraqpipelinewatch.htm; and Brookings Iraq Index, www.brookings.edu/iraqindex.

Figure 6.15 Attacks on Iraqi Oil and Gas Pipelines, Installations, and Personnel: June 2003–January 2006

	Baseline	-Pre Sovereignty	Sovereignty	Election	-Pre Constitution	Referendum
Time Frame	Jan-March 04	April-June 04	July-Oct 04	Nov 04-Jan	Feb-Aug 05	Sept-Oct 05
No. of Infrastructure Attacks	16	39	42	21	16	40

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, July 21, 2005, www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2005/d20050721secstab.pdf.

Figure 6.16 Average Monthly Attacks on Infrastructure by Political Developments

Oil pipelines in the northern part of the country came under repeated attack. According to Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, the upsurge in attacks began in mid-August 2005, following the deadline for writing Iraq's constitution. Between August 15 and September 7, there were more than ten attacks on pipelines.[187]

The situation continued to deteriorate as the date of the referendum approached. The pipelines, linking oil fields in Kirkuk to Iraq's largest oil refinery in Beiji and the Turkish port of Ceyhan, were disrupted more than half-a-dozen times during September and October 2005:[188]

- September 3, 2005: Insurgents bombed the main pipeline running from Kirkuk to Ceyhan, disrupting Iraqi oil exports for more than two weeks and costing billions of dollars in lost revenue.
- September 13, 2005: A fire broke out after a pipeline carrying crude oil from Kirkuk to a Beiji refinery sprang a leak.
- September 15, 2005: Another fire broke out on an oil pipeline in Kirkuk; the cause of the fire was unknown.
- September 21, 2005: A bomb planted by insurgents damaged an oil pipeline connecting the Bay Hassan oil fields to Kirkuk. Repairs were expected to take up to a week.
- October 6, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline near Kirkuk.
- October 12, 2005: An explosion shut down an oil pipeline near the city of Beiji.
- October 20, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline linking Kirkuk to Beiji.
- October 25, 2005: Insurgents bombed the Beiji petroleum refinery, killing at least five.

On the eve of the October referendum, insurgents attacked Baghdad's electrical grid. In a tactic designed to disrupt the vote, insurgents sabotaged power lines and

electricity towers north of the capital, leaving 70 percent of the city in the dark.[189] Even before the attack, however, the amount of electricity Baghdad received was a major bone of contention, with daily electricity service in the capital averaging less than 8 hours per day compared to the national average of 14 hours.[190]

The growing cumulative impact of insurgent activity against the Iraqi infrastructure was regularly reflected in the histograms in the Department of State, *Iraq Weekly Status Report*. For example, the April 27, 2005, edition showed that electric power generation remained far below the U.S. goal, and usually below the prewar level, from January 1, 2004 to April 21, 2005. The continuing threat to electric facilities forced many Iraqis to rely on home or neighborhood generators even in the areas with power. It was also a reason that the United States was able to spend only $1.0 billion of $4.4 billion in programmed aid money on the electricity sector by the end of April 2005, and $261 million out of $1.7 billion on the petroleum sector.[191]

Sabotage and theft helped cripple many of the country's 229 operating water plants by the spring of 2005, and some 90 percent of the municipalities in the country lacked working sewage processing plants, contaminating the main sources of water as they drained into the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The Iraqi Municipalities and Public Works Ministry calculated in April 2005 that it provided water to some 17 million Iraqis (70 percent of the population), and supplies were so bad that some 30 percent of the 17 million did not have access to drinkable water.[192]

In June, Baghdad's mayor, Alaa Mahmoud al-Tamimi, threatened to resign over crumbling infrastructure in the city. On September 7, 2005, a Congressional mandated report stated that the ongoing insurgency had severely hampered efforts to rebuild Iraq's water and sanitation systems. Of the more than $24 billion the U.S. Congress had authorized for reconstruction efforts since 2003, roughly $2.6 billion was allotted for rebuilding water and sanitation services. Congress had initially planned on spending almost $4 billion on water and sanitation projects, but more than $1 billion was eventually redirected toward other priorities, including security needs.[193]

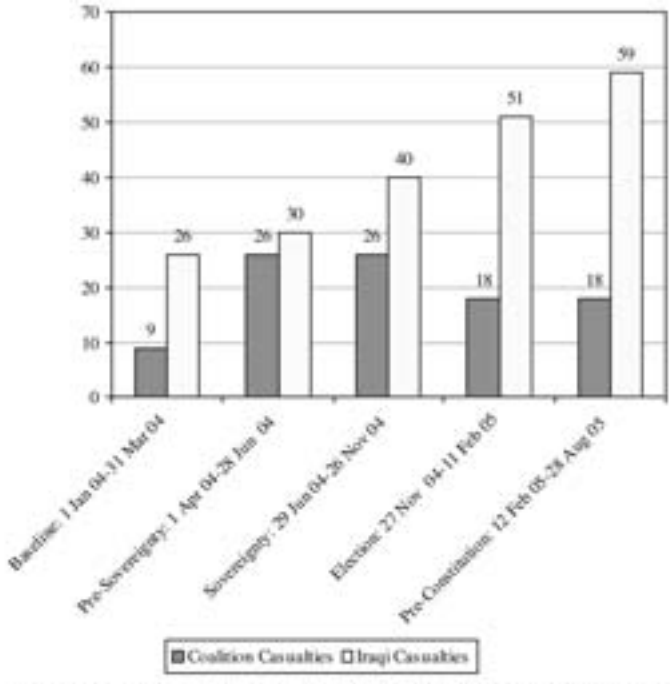
In October 2005, the United States Agency for International Development announced that more than 15,650 houses had recently been connected to the Baghdad Water Distribution System. But the distribution system experienced 60-percent loss, a result of leaks, illegal connections, and sabotage.[194] And, as late as September 2005, several water and sewage stations in Fallujah were still operating below 20-percent capacity.[195]

Coalition and Iraqi Casualties

MNF-I intelligence estimated that the number of insurgent attacks on Coalition forces, Iraqi forces, and Iraqi civilians and acts of sabotage rose by 29 percent in 2005. The total had risen from 26,496 in 2004 to 34,131 in 2005.[196] (The Coalition reported that these attacks have had a relatively consistent average success rate of 24 percent: attacks that cause damage or casualties.)[197]

Figure 6.17 shows average Coalition and Iraqi casualties. The new focus on Iraqi targets had a short-term effect in decreasing the number of insurgent attacks against U.S. forces by more than 25 percent during the early months of 2005. The number of U.S. fatalities also decreased during this period, from 107 in January 2005 to 58 in February 2005 and 36 in March 2005. However, this shift away from targeting U.S. forces in favor of Iraqi forces was short-lived. U.S. fatalities climbed to 52 in April and 80 in May 2005.[198] The number of daily attacks climbed from 45 in March to more than 60 in April. After that point, the daily number of insurgent attacks increased steadily to the point where it averaged around 100 in October 2005.[199]

According to the Pentagon's October 2005 "Measuring Stability and Security In Iraq" report to Congress, "Approximately 80 percent of all attacks are directed against Coalition Forces, but 80 percent of all casualties are suffered by Iraqis."[200] The Pentagon data showed the average number of daily attacks against Iraqis had



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, October 13, 2005, p. 24.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD reports.

Note: The data are derived from unverified initial reports submitted by Coalition elements responding to an incident. These numbers should be used for comparative purposes only. The May and August reports noted that ISF were included in the totals for Iraqi casualties.

Figure 6.17 Average Daily Casualties—Iraqi and Coalition: January 2004–August 2005

more than doubled since early 2004, from around 25 attacks per day to an average of 64 per day in the summer and fall of 2005.

A total of 673 U.S. troops were killed in 2005, versus 714 in 2004, and the number of wounded dropped from 7,990 to 5,639, a drop of 29 percent.[201] U.S. forces saw fewer casualties largely because more Iraqi forces were in the field and there were no major urban battles like the Battle of Fallujah. U.S. fatalities in Iraq fluctuated throughout most of the summer in 2005, with no clear pattern discernable. Seventy-eight U.S. soldiers were killed in June. The death toll for July was 54. The September death toll for U.S. soldiers was 49, down from 85 in August. The death toll for October was 92, nearly a 50-percent increase from the previous month. October was the second-deadliest month for U.S. troops in 2005, second only to January. It was the fourth-deadliest month since the war began. November's death toll was 85.

In November 2005 the U.S. military reported that more than 200 of the U.S. troops killed to date in Iraq were officers. The figure accounted for 10.4 percent of deaths in Iraq, a number similar to the casualty rate of previous wars. Of the 58,178 U.S. soldiers killed in Vietnam, 7,878 or roughly 14 percent, were officers.[202]

The insurgents shifted to Iraqi targets that were more vulnerable and had far more political impact at a point where it had become clear that the United States and its Coalition partners wanted to withdraw many of their forces. The Iraqi Health Ministry provided a breakdown of Iraqi deaths from early November 2004 until early April 2005, although this count relies on uncertain data from morgues and hospitals. The Health Ministry noted the following during this period:[203]

- Thirty-two percent of the 3,853 deaths accounted for by the ministry occurred in Baghdad.
- Al Anbar witnessed the second-highest number of deaths.
- Najaf had the third-highest number of deaths.
- Children represented 211 out of the 3,853 deaths.
- The highest death rates per capita were in Al Anbar, followed by Najaf and Diyala.
- The ministry recorded 15,517 wounded, of which men made up 91 percent.

The Ministry of Defense reported that 85 Iraqi soldiers were killed in May 2005, compared with 40 in April, an increase of 75 percent. At least 79 soldiers were wounded in May, compared with 63 in April. A total of 5,713 Iraqis were killed in 2005, not including insurgents. This included 4,020 civilians, and 1,693 ISF. The MOD and the MOI recorded 1,702 insurgents killed and 9,264 detained.[204]

The Ministry of Interior reported that 151 Iraqi police were killed in May 2005, compared with 86 in April, an increase of 75 percent. At least 325 policemen were wounded in May, compared with 131 in April. The Ministry of Health reported that 434 civilians were killed in May, compared with 299 in April, and that 775 civilians were wounded, versus 598 the previous month.[205]

The Iraqi Ministry of Interior released new figures on Iraqi civilian and security force casualties in June 2005. The ministry found that Iraqi civilians and police

officers died at a rate of about 800 a month from August 2004 until May 2005. Reportedly, insurgents killed 8,175 Iraqis during that time.[206] Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr stated that same month that insurgents had killed approximately 12,000 Iraqis since the Coalition invasion, an average of 500 a month as reported by the *New York Times*.[207]

Iraqi government figures released by the Defense, Interior, and Health ministries in late October 2005 reported more than 4,000 Iraqi deaths (of whom at least 3,000 were civilian) to date for the year 2005.[208] The breakdown was as follows: 3,314 civilians, 1,053 police, and 413 soldiers. Also killed were 1,389 suspected insurgents.[209]

Iraqi officials reported 702 Iraqi deaths for the month of September 2005 alone. The figure fell by 42 percent to 407 the following month. October's figure included 83 police and at least 25 soldiers. Although it was the fourth-deadliest month for U.S. forces, the death toll for Iraqi civilians and security forces was relatively low in October.[210] In late 2005, Iraq Coalition Casualties estimated that the number of Iraqis killed was 26,982–30,380. The worst month for civilians was August, with an estimated 1,524 dead.

THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE COUNTRIES

In 2005, the violence in Iraq and increased sectarianism began to raise concerns in neighboring countries, particularly those with a Sunni majority. Saudi Arabia urged the Iraqi government to compromise on sectarian issues and forecast the escalation of tensions to civil war. Syria continued to be accused by the Coalition of allowing insurgents to pass through its borders. There were also increased allegations of Iranian meddling in Iraqi affairs, which greatly concerned Sunni states.

Iraq's borders totaled 3,650 kilometers in length. Its border with Iran was 1,458 kilometers, with Jordan 181 kilometers, with Kuwait 240 kilometers, with Saudi Arabia 814 kilometers, with Syria 605 kilometers, and with Turkey 352 kilometers. Most of these borders were desert, desolate territory, water barriers, or mountains. Even Iraq's small 58-kilometer coastline was in an area with considerable small craft and shipping traffic, which presented security problems.

Saudi Arabia

The Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, strongly supported the unity of Iraq and their fear of Shi'ite dominance of an Arab country that allied itself with Iran. Saudi Arabia pushed for more Sunni inclusiveness in the constitution-writing process, especially after their lack of participation in the January 2005 elections.

When a draft constitution did not acknowledge Iraq's Arab and Muslim identity, the General Secretary of the Gulf Cooperation Council called the Iraqi constitution "a catastrophe."[211] The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, also warned that if the constitution did not accommodate the Iraqi Sunni community, it would result in sectarian disputes that would threaten the unity of Iraq.[212]

Prince Saud al-Faisal later urged the United States to pressure Iraqi Shi'ites and Kurdish government leaders to work to bring the Iraqi people together. He said, "[Americans] talk now about Sunnis as if they were separate entity from the Shi'ite." He reiterated his fear of an Iraqi civil war saying, "If you allow civil war, Iraq is finished forever."[213]

He also indicated that the Kingdom feared an Iran-Iraq alliance. The Saudi Foreign Minister asserted, "We (US and Saudi Arabia) fought a war together to keep Iran out of Iraq after Iraq was driven out of Kuwait." He added that the U.S. policy in Iraq is "handing the whole country over to Iran without reason." Iranians have established their influence within Iraq, al-Faisal said, because they "pay money. . . install their own people (and) even establish police forces and arm the militias that are there."[214]

Syria

Both senior U.S. and Iraqi officials felt that Syria would overtly agree to try to halt any support of the insurgency, but still allow Islamic extremist groups to recruit young men, have them come to Syria, and then cross the border into Iraq—where substantial numbers became suicide bombers. They also felt Syria has allowed senior ex-Ba'athist cadres to operate from Syria, helping to direct the Sunni insurgency. As has been touched upon earlier, these include top-level officials under Saddam Hussein such as Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, one of Saddam's vice presidents.

Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., the commanding general in Iraq, was careful not to exaggerate the threat of foreign interference. Nevertheless, Casey warned that Syria allowed Iraqi supporters of Saddam Hussein to provide money, supplies, and direction to Sunni insurgents and continues to be a serious source of infiltration by foreign volunteers.[215] General Casey highlighted Syria's complicity in this regard when testifying before the Senate Committee on Armed Services on March 8, 2005:

> There are former regime leaders who come and go from Syria, who operate out of Syria, and they do planning, and they provide resources to the insurgency in Iraq. I have no hard evidence that the Syrian government is actually complicit with those people, but we certainly have evidence that people at low levels with the Syrian government know that they're there and what they're up to.[216]

The U.S. Department of State spokesman described Syria's role as follows in the late spring of 2005:

> I think that what we've seen, again, are some efforts, but it certainly isn't enough. We do believe the Syrians can do more. We do believe there's more they can do along the border to tighten controls.
>
> We do believe that there's more that they can do to deal with the regime elements that are operating out of Syria itself and are supporting or encouraging the insurgents there.
>
> And so, again, it's not simply a matter of them not being able to take the actions, at least from our perspective. Part of it is an unwillingness to take the actions that we know are necessary and they know are necessary.[217]

In late February 2005, the Baghdad television station Al-Iraqiya aired taped confessions of insurgents captured in Iraq. Many of the men, from Sudan, Egypt, and Iraq, said that they were trained in Syria—at least three said they had been trained, controlled, and paid by Syrian intelligence officials. They were instructed to kidnap, behead, and assassinate Iraqi security forces. The majority of the men expressed remorse for their actions and said they were driven almost exclusively by monetary rewards; there was almost no mention of religious or nationalistic motivation.

Syria repeatedly and emphatically denied that it supported or harbored any persons involved in the insurgency in Iraq. There were reports that al-Zarqawi obtained most of his new young volunteers through Syria and that they were recruited and transited in ways that had to be known to Syrian intelligence.[218] There were also media reports that al-Zarqawi's top lieutenants, and perhaps al-Zarqawi himself, met in Syria for planning sessions.[219] These reports were called into question by U.S. intelligence assessments in June 2005.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice both made it clear in mid-2005 that they felt that Syria continued to allow both Iraqi Ba'athist and Islamist extremist elements to operate inside Syria and across the Syrian-Iraqi border.[220] U.S. Lt. Gen. John Vines estimated in summer 2005 that about 150 fighters crossed into Iraq from Syria each month.[221] This presented problems for both Iraqi and Coalition forces because Iraq had comparatively few border posts, many of which were isolated and had been attacked, destroyed, or abandoned.[222]

In a speech before the UN Security Council in May 2005, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari asked that Iraq's neighboring states do more to prevent terrorists from crossing into Iraq. Syria figured prominently in his speech, in which he acknowledged the efforts by the government but implored the regime to make greater efforts. Zebari stated,

> We have learned recently that Syria has stopped more than a thousand foreign fighters from entering Iraq from Syria. We welcome this action but note that it confirms our long-held view that Syria has been one of the main transit routes for foreign terrorists as well as for remnants of the previous regime.[223]

Reportedly, another Iraqi official handed a list over to the Syrians that contained the names, addresses, and specific roles in planning attacks in Iraq of individuals living in Damascus. According to the Iraqi official, the Syrians ignored the list.[224]

U.S. officials commented that as of summer 2005, some intelligence showed that Syrians were providing weapons, training, money, and perhaps even "barracks-like housing" for volunteers who had made their way from Yemen, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere. Furthermore, the intelligence indicated that the makeshift staging areas for militants preparing to cross the border into Iraq had become more complex.[225] A series of *Financial Times* interviews with would-be militants and their families in summer 2005 revealed the extent to which Syria might be aiding the insurgency. A mother of one fighter stated, "[Y]ou go to a mosque to make initial

contact. Then you are sent to a private home and from there for a week's intensive training inside Syria."[226] The militants who were interviewed remarked that they were trained in remote Syrian territory, close to the Iraqi border, with a focus on how to use Kalashnikovs, RPGs, and remote detonators. The fighters said that some attacks were even planned from Syrian territory.[227]

Washington's warnings to Damascus over border security intensified during the fall of 2005. On October 7, Syrian President Bashar Assad told the pan-Arab newspaper *Al Hayat,* "They (Americans) have no patrols at the border, not a single American or Iraqi on their side of the border. . . We cannot control the border from one side."[228] Assad's comments came a day after President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair both issued renewed warnings against continued Syrian and Iranian involvement in Iraqi affairs, specifically their roles in giving shelter to Islamic extremists.

On September 12, 2005, in a Department of State briefing, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad said that Syria was the "number one offender" in the Middle East working to impede the success of Iraq. Khalilzad said Syria was knowingly allowing terrorists to use its territory for training exercises and permitting them to transit across Syria into Iraq and kill Iraqis.[229]

Iran

There were growing accusations of Iranian involvement in Iraq throughout 2005. A number of experts believed that Tehran-backed militias infiltrated Iraqi security forces. The*London Times* in September 2005 identified at least a dozen active Islamic groups with ties to Tehran. Eight were singled out as having considerable cross-border influence:[230]

- Badr Brigades: A Shi'ite militia force of 12,000 trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards and blamed for a number of killings of Sunni Muslims. They are thought to control several cities in southern Iraq.
- Islamic Da'waa Party: A Shi'ite party that has strong links to Iran. Its leader, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the present Prime Minister, has vowed to improve ties between the two neighbours.
- Mahdi Army: Received arms and volunteers from Iran during its battle against U.S. and British troops last year. British forces in mid-September 2005 arrested the group's commander in Basra, Ahmed al-Fartusi.
- Mujahideen for Islamic Revolution in Iraq: A Tehran-backed militia blamed for the murder of six British Royal Military Police soldiers in Majar el-Kabir in 2003.
- Thar Allah (Vengeance of God): An Iranian-backed terror group blamed for killing former members of the ruling Ba'ath party and enforcing strict Islamic law.
- Jamaat al-Fudalah (Group of the Virtuous): A paramilitary group that imposes Islamic rules on Shi areas and has attacked shops selling alcohol and music.
- Al-Fadilah (Morality): A secret political movement financed by Iran. It is thought to have many members among provincial officials.

- Al-Quawaid al-Islamiya (Islamic Bases): An Iranian-backed Islamic movement that uses force to impose Islamic law.

There were growing numbers of reports of Iranian-backed groups exerting influence over the lives of everyday Iraqis, especially those in Shi'ite-dominated southern Iraq. Achieving a government job in the southern port city of Basra was almost impossible without the sponsorship of one of these groups. Teaching posts in local schools and universities were increasingly filled only by those deemed ideologically loyal to Iran.[231] Iranian goods flooded local markets and Farsi was becoming the area's second language.[232]

The nature of Iranian involvement in Iraqi politics was multifaceted. Many of the Iraqi exile groups and militia members that lived in Iran before the fall of Saddam Hussein were never particularly grateful to Iran during the time they had to remain in exile and are not pro-Iranian now.

Iraq's Shi'ite Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani rejected the religious legitimacy of a *velayat-e faqih* or supreme religious leader like Iran's Ali Khamenei. The major Iraqi Shi'ite parties that did operate in Iran before Saddam's fall endorsed the idea of a *velayat-e faqih* while they were dependent on Iran, but since have taken the position that Iraq should not be a theocratic state, much less under the control of an Ayatollah-like figure. Many did, however, endorse making Islam the official religion in Iraq and including it in the constitution.

In summer 2005, the Iraqi and Iranian Ministers of Defense, Sadoun Dulaimi and Adm. Ali Shamkhani, met and concluded a five-point military agreement. The meeting, however, produced conflicting statements as to what had been agreed upon. The Iranian Minister, Shamkhani, asserted that as part of the deal Iran would train a number of Iraqi troops. His counterpart, Dulaimi, however, stated that the Iraqi government was satisfied with the Coalition efforts and that Iran would not be training Iraqi troops. Iran would, however, be providing $1 billion in aide that would go toward reconstruction. Dulaimi conceded that some would go to the Ministry of Defense.[233]

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani traveled to Iran in late November, becoming the first Iraqi head of state to do so in almost four decades. Talabani spent three days in Iran and met with both Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Mowaffak al-Rubaie, who accompanied Talabani on the trip, told reporters he asked the Iranians to use their influence with Damascus to secure Syrian cooperation in sealing off the Iraqi border to insurgents.[234] In their meeting, Khamenei told Talabani that foreign troops were to blame for the ongoing violence and urged the Iraqi president to tell the occupiers to go: "The presence of foreign troops is damaging for the Iraqis, and the Iraqi government should ask for their departure by proposing a timetable. . . the US and Britain will eventually have to leave Iraq with a bitter experience."[235]

According to Talabani, Khamenei promised to support the Iraqi president's efforts to end the insurgency. With regard to Iraq, Khamenei told the official Islamic Republic News Agency, "Your security is our own security and Iran honors Iraq's

independence and power . . . We will extend assistance to you in those fields." But Khamenei made a point of denying any responsibility for the violence next door, saying, "Iran considers the United States to be responsible for all crimes and terrorist acts in Iraq and the suffering and misery of the Iraqi people."[236]

Jordan

Some analysts believed that a limited number of insurgents were crossing into Iraq from the Iraq-Jordan border. Most Arab Jordanians were very much opposed to the rise of a Shi'ite-dominated Iraq. While commentators focused on the fact that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was a Jordanian, it should be noted that the Jordanian government sentenced al-Zarqawi to death in absentia on multiple occasions. Though there may have been some Jordanians involved in the insurgency, Jordan was very cooperative in its efforts to train Iraqi police and to monitor its borders.

The Jordanian government trained a good number of the Iraqi security forces, in part because it was so deeply concerned over the extreme Islamist elements within its own territory. King Abdullah II pledged to train over 30,000 Iraqi military and police within Jordan and on January 13, 2005, the 12th class graduated from its training, bringing the total to almost 10,000 Iraqi security forces trained in Jordan since efforts began.[237] There were, however, incidents involving insurgents and terrorists within Jordan's borders. In spring 2004, for example, a plot to create a massive chemical-laced explosion over Amman by radical Islamists was uncovered and disrupted by the Jordanian security forces. A Jordanian, Raad Mansour al-Banna, was the main suspect in the suicide bombing of a police recruitment site in Hilla in February 2005, killing more than 125.[238]

In summer 2005, Jordanian forces broke up an alleged recruitment ring in Amman. According to the main defendant Zaid Horani, he and several other Jordanians crossed into Syria and boarded buses in Damascus, Syria, that were bound for Iraq as the Coalition forces invaded. Horani apparently returned home and helped to organize a recruitment pipeline for Jordanians interested in joining the insurgency in Iraq. Figuring prominently in the case was a Syrian, Abu al-Janna, who was allegedly the point of contact in Iraq for the Jordanians. Al-Janna was reportedly a central figure in the regional terror network.[239]

On August 19, 2005, Katyusha rockets were fired at two U.S. warships in Jordan's Red Sea Aqaba port. None of the rockets struck the ship; one hit a warehouse, killing a Jordanian soldier; another exploded near a Jordanian hospital, resulting in no casualties; and the third landed outside of Eilat Airport in neighboring Israel, but failed to explode. The Iraqi branch of al-Qa'ida, linked to Jordanian Abu Masab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for the attack. Four days later, Jordanian officials arrested a Syrian man, Mohammed Hassan Abdullah al-Sihly, whom they accused of carrying out the attack. Police said three accomplices slipped across the border into Iraq.[240] Jordanian Interior Minister Awni Yirfas confirmed his government was working with Iraqi authorities in order to capture the militants.[241]

Turkey

The Kurdish issue in northern Iraq had two major implications for Turkey. First, Ankara was concerned about activities of Kurdish separatist groups in northern Iraq, whose chief objective was an independent Kurdistan in and around Turkey. Turkey was engaging in heavy diplomacy with both the U.S. and Iraqi administrations to crack down on these organizations and eliminate the Kurdish rebels, which were launching attacks into Turkish territory. This long-standing concern was the primary reason for the presence of Turkish intelligence and military units in northern Iraq since the 1991 Gulf War.

Second, Turkey consistently opposed strong autonomy for a Kurdish zone within Iraq, out of the fear that it would create unrest and aspirations for independence among Turkey's own Kurdish population. Given the rich water supplies in the Kurdish-populated regions of Turkey and the colossal irrigation project (the Southeast Anatolian Project) that Turkey invested in for over four decades, an autonomous Turkish Kurdistan is out of the question for Turkish policy makers.

In summer 2005, Kurdish PKK rebels launched a series of attacks on Turkish forces allegedly from bases in northern Iraq. In two months, more than 50 Turkish security forces were killed in attacks, mostly in the form of planted IEDs, a weapon utilized widely by Iraqi insurgents.

The Turkish prime minister also threatened cross-border action against the rebels if the attacks did not stop, though such action was generally regarded as extremely provocative and even illegal. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, however, stated, "There are certain things that international law allows. When necessary, one can carry out cross border operations. I hope that such a need will not emerge."[242]

Exacerbating the debate about cross-border operations were the conflicting reports that the United States, which considered the PKK a terrorist organization, had ordered the Turkish military to capture the organization's leaders. A member of the Turkish military stated that the United States had agreed to seize the leaders while U.S. military spokesmen were unaware of such an agreement.

The official U.S. position seemed to be that the United States opposed any cross-border action as an infringement on sovereignty and likely to incite further violence between the Kurds and the various Iraqi ethnic groups and sects opposed to their independence or autonomy. Furthermore, the United States made it clear that any discussion over the PKK should center on the Iraqi government. U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers stated, "I think the difference now is that they [Turkey] are dealing with a sovereign Iraqi government, and a lot of these discussions will have to occur between Turkey and Iraq, not between Turkey and the United States."[243]

Despite the tension in U.S. and Turkish ties, and Turkey's relations with Iraq, Turkey was significantly involved in postwar reconstruction in Iraq. Turkey also offered to assist with the training of Iraqi police forces.

7

The Impact of the December 15, 2005, Elections: December 15, 2005–February 21, 2006

December 15, 2005	Iraq holds nationwide elections for a permanent government. There are a few incidents involving light violence, but no major attacks. Sunni participation is much higher than in the January election. The Shi'ite coalition, the United Iraqi Alliance, wins the majority of seats in the proportional representation election and has the responsibility to select a prime minister. Ibrahim al-Jaafari continues on in that position as the various Shi'ite parties debate.
January 2006	The Mujahedeen Shura Council, an insurgent umbrella group that unifies several neo-Salafi elements under the leadership of al-Qa'ida, is created.
February 3, 2006	A suicide bomber kills 135 people and wounds hundreds more by driving a truck laden with one ton of explosives into a market in a mainly Shi'ite area of Baghdad.

Like the election before it, the December 15, 2005, election did not have a stabilizing effect, did not undercut support for the insurgency, and did not prevent the growth of a more serious mix of civil conflicts. While many Sunnis did participate in the political process for the first time, Iraqis voted along sectarian and ethnic lines, and Sunni participation did more to divide the country than unite it.

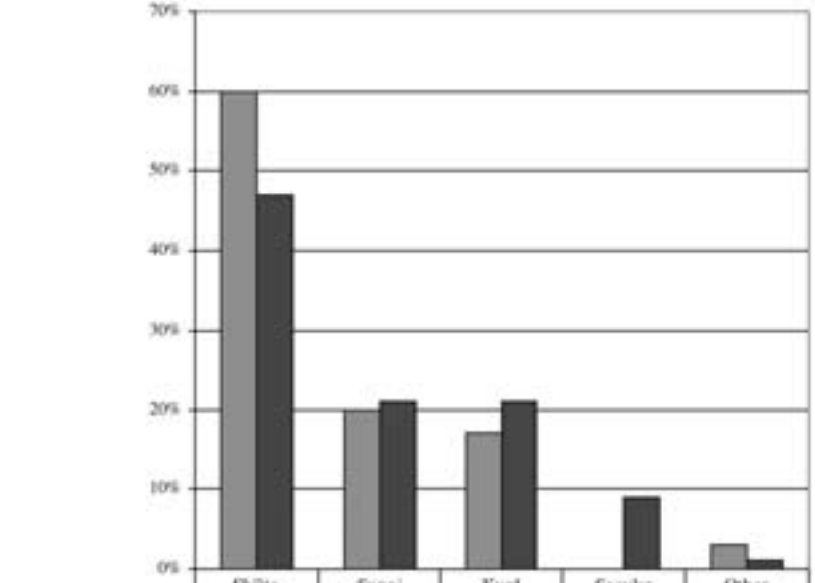
The voter turnout figures released by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq put turnout in the December 15 election at 70 percent, the highest in any post-Saddam-era election held to date. A total of 10.9 million of Iraq's 15.6 million registered voters voted in the election, and Sunnis voted heavily in every area where insurgents who opposed political action could not threaten them.[1] At the same time,

this turnout reflected the polarization of Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines; turnout was high because of the competition for power.

The new Council of Representatives had 275 seats. The United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), the Shi'ite coalition party, won 5.2 million votes and 128 of the seats. The Kurdish Alliance won 2.6 million votes and 53 seats. The Sunni-dominated Iraqi Accordance Front won 1.8 million votes and 44 seats in parliament. The Sunni Iraqi National Dialogue Front, a coalition of Sunni groups, received nearly 500,000 votes and 11 parliamentary seats, while the secular Iraqi National List won 25 seats.[2]

Although charges of fraud delayed the final certification of the election results until February 9, 2006, fraud was found to be minor and did not change the results. The end result was to allocate seats to the main factions as follows: Shi'ites, 47 percent; Kurds, 21 percent; Sunnis, 21 percent; Allawi's secular nationalists, 9 percent; and other groups 1 percent.[3]

- Figure 7.1 breaks down the election results by ethnic and sectarian groups and compares those numbers to the Iraqi population as a whole.
- Figure 7.2 shows the number of seats won by each of the main parties.



	Shi'ite	Sunni	Kurd	Secular	Other
Population estimated	60%	20%	17%	-	3%
Council	47%	21%	21%	9%	1%

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, February 2006, p. 9.

Figure 7.1 December 2005 Election Results: Composition of the Council of Representatives

Figure 7.2 Election Results, January and December 2005

Slate/Party	Seats Jan 2005	Seats Dec 2005
United Iraqi Alliance (Shi'ite)	140	128
Kurdistan Alliance (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK] and Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP])	75	53
Iraqi National List (secular, Allawi)	40	25
Iraqi Concord Front (Sunni)	–	44
Iraqi National Dialogue Front (Sunni)	–	25
Iraqi National Congress (was part of UIA in Jan. vote)	–	0
Iraqis Party (Yawar, Sunni; was part of Iraqis List in Dec. vote)	5	–
Iraqi Turkomen Front (Turkomen, Kirkuk based)	3	1
National Independent Cadres and Elites (Jan.)/Risalyun (Dec.) (pro-Sadr)	3	2
People's Union (Communist, nonsectarian; on Iraqis List in Dec. vote)	2	–
Kurdistan Islamic Group (Islamic Kurd)	2	5
Islamic Action Front (Shi'ite Islamist, Karbala)	2	0
National Democratic Alliance (secular)	1	–
Rafidain National List (Assyrian)	1	1
Liberation and Reconciliation Gathering (Sunni, secular)	1	3
Ummah Party (secular)	0	1
Yazidi List (Kurdish)	–	1

Source: Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Election, Constitution, and Government," CRS Report for Congress, December 22, 2006.

- Figure 7.3 shows the percentage of the vote won by the four major coalition parties in each of Iraq's 18 provinces.
- Figure 7.4 also breaks down the election results by province, but additionally shows the support for minority parties. This chart shows the extent to which Iraqis voted along sectarian and ethnic lines in given provinces, but also just how strong the minority presence was, and how hard it was to create a federal structure along these lines.

The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, described these results as unsurprising "given that Saddam for decades purposely fostered a lack of trust among communities."[4] He also noted, however, that cooperation now had to be forged across ethnic and sectarian divisions for a unified Iraq to remain possible and for the new government to address the issues at the root of the political conflict.[5]

The reality was that these election results reflected a far deeper level of sectarian and ethnic division than many Iraqi and U.S. officials had predicted. The results showed that Ayad Allawi and the Iraqi National List got minimal support: 9 percent in Babil, 14 percent in Baghdad, 11 percent in Dyala, 12 percent in Karbala, 8 percent in Najaf, 11 percent in Nineveh, 9 percent in Qadisyyah (Qadisyyah is more common usage), 11 percent in Salahaddin, 5 percent in Theqar, and 8 percent in Wasit.

Allawi's party made complaints about electoral "fraud" similar to those made by the Sunnis. Many of the expectations that this group might do well, however, were

Figure 7.3 Percentage of Vote Won by Four Major Coalition Parties in Each of Iraq's 18 Provinces

	United Iraqi Coalition/ Iraqi National List/ United Iraqi Alliance	Kurdistan Gathering/ Kurdish Alliance	Tawafoq Iraqi Front/ Iraqi Accordance Front	
Basrah	77.5	N/A*	4.65	11.01
Missan	86.91	N/A	N/A	4.31
Theqar	86.74	N/A	N/A	5.04
Muthana	86.45	N/A	N/A	4.33
Qadissiya	81.47	N/A	N/A	7.78
Najaf	81.99	N/A	N/A	7.78
Salahaddin	7.44	N/A	33.09	10.78
Wassit	80.74	N/A	N/A	8.06
Karbala	76.08	N/A	N/A	11.70
Babil	6.16	N/A	5.47	8.67
Baghdad	56.55	N/A	21.10	13.41
Anbar	N/A	N/A	73.75	3.08
Diyala	22.37	12.39	37.53	10.60
Kirkuk	N/A	53.40	5.92	N/A
Ninewa	7.60	19.42	36.71	10.99
Sulaymaniya	N/A	87.18	N/A	N/A
Erbil	N/A	94.69	N/A	N/A
Dohuk	N/A	90.31	N/A	N/A

* N/A indicates that the party did not win enough percentage of the vote in that province to gain a seat in the parliament.

Source: Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq: Unverified Election Results, www.ieciraq.org/English/Frameset_English.htm.

based on the attitudes of elites in the Baghdad area, and not on the realities of a divided Iraq. The election results were also tainted by personal attacks on Allawi. Allawi had received money from the Central Intelligence Agency during his opposition to Saddam Hussein, and he was attacked during the campaign as a tool of the United States. This campaign led to an increasingly bitter set of exchanges between Allawi and leading Shi'ite politicians in the UIA, and even to threats by the Badr Organization to overthrow any Allawi government that emerged out of the election.

The Sunni Iraqi National Dialogue Front received 500,000 votes and 11 parliamentary seats.[6] The Iraqi Accordance Front or Tawafoq Iraqi Front received 1.8 million votes, or 19 percent of the total national vote, and 44 seats in parliament. This result was particularly important since the key party in this group was one of the few Sunni parties to openly endorse the constitution. Political factions such as the Iraqi National Dialogue Front or Hewar National Iraqi Front were more hostile to it.

If one compares the vote for these two parties by governorate, the results were mixed. The Iraqi Accordance Front received 74 percent of the preliminary vote in

Figure 7.4 Parties Garnering 5 Percent or More by Province

Province	Religion/Sect	Votes	Percent
Anbar (Total of 9 seats)	Sunni		
Tawafoq Iraqi Front		272,707	73.75 percent
Hewar National Iraqi Front		66,322	17.94
Babil (Total of 11 seats)	Shi'ite, some Sunni		
United Iraqi Alliance		418,919	75.74
Iraqi National List		48,593	8.79
Baghdad (Total of 59 seats)	Shi'ite and Sunni		
Unified Iraqi Alliance		1,398,778	58.46
Tawafoq Iraqi Front		454,107	18.98
Iraqi National List		330,082	13.80
Basrah (Total of 16 seats)	Shi'ite, some mixed		
Unified Iraqi Alliance		615,255	77.46
Iraqi National List		87,538	11.02
Diyala (Total of 10 seats)	Kurd, Sunni, Shi'ite		
Tawafoq Iraqi Front		182,223	36.77
Unified Iraqi Alliance		110,285	22.26
Kurdistan Gathering		66,508	13.42
National Iraqi List		52,624	10.62
Hewar National Iraqi Front		50,971	10.29
Dohuk (Total of 7 seats)	Kurd, some minority		
Kurdistan Gathering		355,084	89.97
Kurdistan Islamic Union		28,957	7.34
Erbil (Total of 13 seats)	Kurd		
Kurdistan Gathering		628,181	95.15
Karbala (Total of 6 seats)	Shi'ite, some Sunni		
Unified Iraqi Alliance		230,211	76.02
Iraqi National List		35,502	11.72
Tamim/Kirkuk (Total of 9 seats)	Mixed Kurd, Sunni, Shi'ite, Turkman		
Kurdistan Gathering		266,737	51.89
Hewar National Iraqi Front Minority			14.24
Iraqi Turkomen Front			11.62
Tawafoq Iraqi Front			6.17
Missan/Maysan (Total of 7 seats)	Shi'ite		
Unified Iraqi Coalition		275,505	86.86
Muthana (Total of 5 seats)	Shi'ite, small Sunni		
Unified Iraqi Alliance		176,222	86.42
Najaf (Total of 8 seats)	Shi'ite		
Unified Iraqi Alliance		302,573	82.03
Iraqi National List		28,777	7.80
Ninewa/Nineveh (Total of 19 seats)	Sunni, Kurd, Shi'ite, minorities		
Tawafoq Iraqi Front		302,518	36.88
Kurdistan Gathering minority		157,476	19.20

Iraqi National List		91,661	11.17
Hewar National Iraqi Front		82,976	10.11
Unified Iraqi Coalition		61,038	7.44
Qadisiyyah (Total of 8 seats)	Shi'ite, some Sunni		
Unified Iraqi Alliance		269,609	81.38
Iraqi National List		28,296	8.54
Salahaddin (Total of 8 seats)	Sunni, some Shi'ite		
Tawafoq Iraqi Front		164,116	33.67
Hewar National Iraqi Front		94,180	19.32
Iraqi National List		52,116	10.69
Liberation and Reconciliation Gathering		45,490	9.33
Unified Iraqi Alliance		35,951	7.38
Sulaymaniya (Total of 15 seats)	Kurd		
Kurdistan Gathering		685,900	87.13
Islamic Union of Kurdistan		85,145	10.82
Theqar/Dhi Qar (Total of 12 seats)	Shi'ite		
Unified Iraqi Coalition		499,582	86.63
National Iraqi List		29,028	5.03
Wasit (Total of 8 seats)	Shi'ite/Sunni		
Unified Iraqi Alliance		279,616	80.68
Iraqi National List		28,053	8.09

Note: Kurds are mixed, but largely Sunni. Sunni in this table equals Sunni Arab; Shi'ite equals Shi'ite Arab.

Source: Adapted from Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq Web site, December 20, 2005, http://www.ieciraq.org/English/Frameset_english.htm.

Anbar, 19 percent in Baghdad, 37 percent in Diyala, 6 percent in Kirkuk, 37 percent in Nineveh, and 34 percent in Salahaddin. The Iraqi Front for National Dialogue received 18 percent of the preliminary vote in Anbar, 10 percent in Diyala, 14 percent in Kirkuk, 10 percent in Nineveh, and 19 percent in Salahaddin.

Many Iraqis clearly saw a need to vote an ethnic or sectarian ticket in this election rather than risk "wasting" their vote on a minority party. They did so even though an ABC-Time Oxford Research International poll did not show strong support for a religious government. ABC reported, "Preference for a democratic political structure has advanced, to 57 percent of Iraqis, while support for an Islamic state has lost ground, to 14 percent. The rest, 26 percent, chiefly in Sunni Arab areas, favor a 'single strong leader.'"[7]

ONLY THE BEGINNING: CREATING A PERMANENT GOVERNMENT AND CONSTITUTION

The final voting totals were only part of the story in determining how political power would evolve over the months to come, or exactly which parties would get a given number of representatives in the new National Assembly. The true outcome

of the election came to be determined by months of negotiation to determine which Iraqi parties could best play "let's make a deal." The election did not resolve any major issue confronting the Iraqi people. It was not a "turning point," but a "trigger." It started a political process that would determine the future of Iraqi governance during the course of 2006, whether Iraq had a solid chance of emerging out of its present turmoil with stability, as well as the success or failure of the Coalition in Iraq.

The election was supposed to be followed by the following schedule for political action:

- Fifteen days after the final election results are announced, the newly elected Council of Representatives (National Assembly in the old government) meets for the first time. It is supposed to elect a speaker. The Council of Representatives must then negotiate among its members, without a clear deadline, to elect a Presidential Council with a president and two deputy presidents. They must be approved by two-thirds of the Council of Representatives. (This allows a Sunni, a Shi'ite, and a Kurd to share the presidency, but this is not required.)
- Fifteen days after the Council of Representatives approves the Presidential Council, it is supposed to agree on a prime minister (in practice, chosen by the major parties). The Presidential Council must unanimously approve the choice.
- No more than 30 days later, the new prime minister announces his cabinet.
- The Council of Representatives must then begin a four-month review of the constitution.
- The Council of Representatives must approve any amendments by a majority (goes up to two-thirds after four months).
- Two months later, the nation votes on a revised constitution.

In practice, it took until June for those elected to create a new government, transform vaguely defined political parties and coalitions into specific arrangements to share given ministries, and even start to address the issues raised by the unresolved areas in the new constitution.

WHAT THE ELECTIONS DID AND DID NOT SHOW: IRAQI PUBLIC OPINION

The election results did little to reflect the attitudes of Iraqi voters. However, the Iraqi public opinion polls conducted in the wake of the election did shed light on attitudes toward governance, security, and U.S./Iraqi forces. These results were a warning of growing sectarian tensions and divisions.

Iraqi Attitudes toward Governance and the U.S. Nation-Building Effort

Support for the December 15 elections differed by ethnic group and sect. Figure 7.5 shows the results of a WorldPublicOpinion.org poll.[8] It illustrates that only

Figure 7.5 Iraqi Attitudes toward the Future Governance in Iraq: Early January 2006

(Support Shown in Percent)	Total	Kurd	Shi'ite Arab	Sunni Arab	Other
Iraq Is					
Headed In Right Direction	64	76	84	6	60
Headed in Wrong Direction	36	23	16	93	40
Parliamentary Elections Were					
Free and Fair	66	77	89	5	49
Not Free and Fair	33	19	11	94	51
New Parliament Will Be Legitimate					
Will	68	81	90	6	51
Will Not	31	16	10	92	47
Suffering from Ousting of Saddam Was					
Worth It	77	91	98	13	64
Not Worth It	22	8	2	83	31

Note: Small percentages of "don't know" and "refused to answer" are not shown.
Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "What the Iraq Public Wants: -A WorldPublicOpinion.org Poll-," January 2–5, 2006, sample of 1,000, with 150 Sunni Arab over-sample.

5 percent of Sunni Arabs felt that the elections were free and fair, compared with a majority of Shi'ites and Kurds. Despite Sunni participation in the election, public opinion polls also showed that Sunnis were divided as to their support for democracy, as shown in Figure 7.6.

When Sunnis were asked their current preference for a type of government, only 38 percent favored democracy versus 57 percent of all Iraqis, 75 percent in mixed areas like Baghdad, 63 percent in Kurdish areas, and 45 percent in Shi'ite areas. The ABC-Time-Oxford Research International poll found that Sunnis had a more favorable attitude toward democracy when they looked five years into the future, but it was unclear exactly what kind of "democracy" they favored.[9]

Sunnis were much more likely to prefer a strong leader for life over democracy than other Iraqis. Sunni attitudes were generally far less favorable toward the government and the elections than Shi'ites and Kurds. The poll found that "the contrast among Sunnis is stark: Only 27 percent approve of the constitution; 48 percent say they are confident regarding the elections; and only 12 percent believe the

Figure 7.6 Iraqi Political Divisions by Iraqi Ethnic Group and Arab Religious Sect

What Iraq Needs in Five Years	All	Shi'ite	Sunni (In Percent)	Mixed	Kurdish
Democracy	64	59	55	74	61
Islamic State	12	24	4	8	14
Stronger Leader	18	11	34	11	17

Source: ABC News Poll: Where Things Stand, "Poll Finds Broad Optimism in Iraq, But Also Deep Divisions Among Groups," ABC News, December 23, 2005.

government has done a good job."[10] It also found that Sunni confidence in the elections was just 48 percent versus 80 percent elsewhere.

It seems likely that many of those Sunnis who did favor democracy sometimes did so more because they opposed an Islamic state they felt would be dominated by Shi'ites than because of any basic faith in democracy. Some 88 percent in Sunni governorates also favored a unified Iraq versus only 56 percent in Shi'ite provinces, but this again seems likely to reflect a fear of the loss of oil wealth, power, and isolation as well as a deep belief in national unity. The election left many fault lines that the insurgency could exploit in the future. An ABC-Time-Oxford Research International report on "Where Things Stand" in December 2005 also found major differences between Sunnis and Shi'ites in economic areas the insurgency could exploit:

> Virtually all signs of optimism vanish when one is interviewing Iraq's Sunni Muslims. There's more on this in the Local Government section of the report; suffice for now to cite a pair of poll results. While 54 percent of Shi'ite Muslims believe the country is in better shape than it was before the war, only 7 percent of Sunnis believe the same. Optimism about security—80 percent of Shi'ites and 94 percent of Kurds say they feel safer—is absent among Sunnis. Only 11 percent of Iraq's Sunni Muslims say they feel safer than they did under Saddam.
>
> Overall, there is a Rorschach-test quality to all this. One could easily sift through the research and field reporting and conclude that Iraq is in danger of collapse; one could almost as easily glean from the same data that there is great cause for optimism.
>
> At the heart of the "collapse" scenario is a litany of dashed hopes. Many Iraqis cannot understand why—two-and-a-half years after the Americans arrived—electricity and sewage are not more reliable, why more reconstruction projects have not reached their neighborhoods, why corruption remains so prevalent and why their local (and in many cases democratically elected) officials have not changed things for the better.
>
> Yet there are ample reasons for optimism: The burgeoning commerce that now touches nearly all corners of the country; an economy growing, thanks in part to the high price of oil; per-capita income up 60 percent, to $263 per month; improvements in health care and education; and the widely held belief that next week's elections will make a positive difference. Seventy-six percent of Iraqis told us they were "confident" the elections would produce a "stable government"—and despite the sectarian divisions, few Iraqis express concern about civil war.[11]

Ironically, this latter statement illustrates the dilemmas and contradictions in reporting on Iraq and Iraqi attitudes. The rise in per capita income was a national average based on dividing the total population into the total gross national product measured in purchasing power parity terms. It was driven as much by a flood of wartime income and aid as oil revenue, and the distribution was unquestionably far less equitable than at the time of Saddam Hussein.

As ABC reported in its mid-December 2005 poll,

> Unemployment overall is difficult to gauge. There is a growing "informal economy," and many Iraqis have taken second jobs. A U.N. survey published in May 2005 put

> unemployment at 18.4 percent; this is almost certainly a low-end figure. . . nationwide unemployment currently hovers between 27 percent and 40 percent.
>
> . . . The work rolls remain decimated because of the purging of the old army and much of the old Ba'athist apparatus. Whatever the political benefits or costs of that much-debated policy, there is no question that it put a great many Iraqi men out of work. Further, the Iraqi government no longer finds it practical or feasible to employ the sprawling work force that existed during the rule of Saddam Hussein.[12]

ABC also found negligible support or gratitude for the U.S. aid effort: Only 18 percent of the Iraqis polled described the postwar construction efforts in their area as "very effective." A total of 52 percent said they were ineffective or had never occurred at all. Only 6 percent saw the United States as playing a main role in the reconstruction process, and only 12 percent gave credit to the government.

The WorldPublicOpinion.org poll found similar results. In the nation-building area, only 33 percent felt the United States was doing a good job. Another 44 percent approved, but thought the United States was doing a poor job, and 23 percent disapproved, as shown in Figure 7.7. Again, major differences occurred by sect and ethnicity: Some 54 percent of Kurds felt the United States was doing a good job, 42 percent approved but thought the United States was doing a poor job, and only 9 percent disapproved. In the case of Arab Shi'ites, however, only 37 percent felt the United States was doing a good job, 52 percent approved but thought the United States was doing a poor job, and 11 percent disapproved. And, in the case of Arab Sunnis, only 6 percent felt the United States was doing a good job, 20 percent approved but thought the United States was doing a poor job, and 74 percent disapproved.

Iraqi Attitudes toward Security

Public opinion toward security after the election continued to follow a downward trend. A total of 49 percent of all Iraqis polled said they felt unsafe and cited terrorism as the main reason. However, when they were asked what they did to feel safer, 67 percent said they avoided U.S. forces, 52 percent said they avoided checkpoints, 47 percent said they avoided the police and government buildings, and 43 percent said they were careful about what they said.

The ABC report on the situation in Iraq in mid-December noted the following:

> The impact of security shortfalls remains significant. Violence has hampered reconstruction, in western and central Iraq in particular, and it has meant that badly needed funds for electricity, clean water, education and salaries for health care professionals are spent instead on security. In one stunning measure of "Where Things Stand" in Iraq we found that as of October 2005, approximately $5 billion of the $18.4 billion appropriated by the U.S. Congress for reconstruction in Iraq had been diverted to security needs.
>
> Many parents have become more afraid to allow their children, girls in particular, to attend school, and some Iraqis are too frightened even to visit the doctor when sick.

Figure 7.7 Iraqi Attitudes toward the U.S. Aid Effort in Iraq

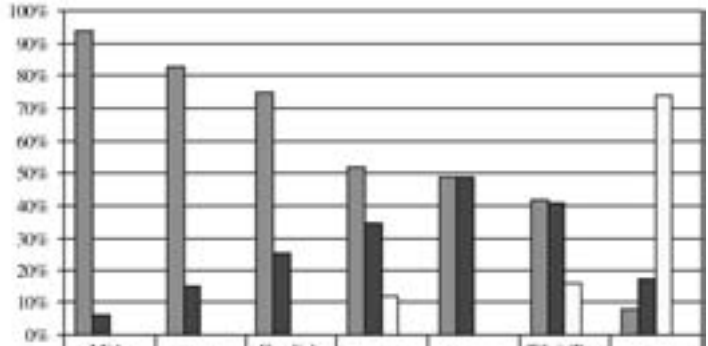
(Support Shown in Percent)	Total	Kurd	Shi'ite Arab	Sunni Arab	Other
Training Iraqi Security Forces					
Approve and United States is doing good job	33	54	37	6	23
Approve but United States is doing poor job	44	42	52	20	67
Disapprove	23	4	11	74	9
Assisting with the Economic Development of Iraq					
Approve and United States is doing good job	29	36	36	5	26
Approve but United States is doing poor job	46	51	53	19	67
Disapprove	25	12	11	76	7
Assisting with the Development of Iraq's Oil Industry					
Approve and United States is doing good job	28	41	35	4	21
Approve but United States is doing poor job	44	46	51	20	55
Disapprove	27	12	14	76	14
Help Build Government Institutions					
Approve and United States is doing good job	23	37	27	4	5
Approve but United States is doing poor job	50	57	59	15	79
Disapprove	27	6	14	80	14
Develop Infrastructure (Roads, Electricity, etc.)					
Approve and United States is doing good job	20	24	26	4	2
Approve but United States is doing poor job	52	57	62	16	81
Disapprove	34	11	24	81	14
Meet Community and Local Needs					
Approve and United States is doing good job	25	39	29	6	9
Approve but United States is doing poor job	45	48	54	14	67
Disapprove	30	11	17	80	23

Note: The results for "refuse to answer" or "don't know" have been deleted. The percentages are too small to be relevant.

Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "What the Iraq Public Wants: -A WorldPublicOpinion.org Poll-," January 2–5, 2006, some of 1,000, with 150 Sunni Arab over-sample.

> . . .A strange calm pervades some cities where local militias have seized power. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Karbala, a major city in southern Iraq where such militia appear to have infiltrated the police and security forces. It's a development that outsiders, and some locals, view with fear and dismay—how, after all, can the true authorities hold power and garner respect when bands of armed men outside the government set up checkpoints and rule the streets? Yet many locals—in Karbala at least—report that these militias have improved security. An "iron hand" may be at work, and it may be a fleeting calm, but for the moment it is noticed and appreciated.[13]

Figure 7.8 shows Iraqi perceptions of safety by area, showing the results of Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) polling.[14] Some 93 percent of Arab Sunnis felt Iraq was headed in the wrong direction versus 36 percent of all Iraqis, and only 16 percent of Arab Shi'ites and 23 percent of Kurds—although 40 percent of other Iraqi minorities did feel the same as most Sunnis.



	Mid-Euphrates	South	Kurdish Areas	Baghdad	Kirkuk	Tikrit/Baquba	Mosul
Very Safe	94%	83%	75%	52%	49%	42%	0.08
Not Very Safe	6%	15%	25%	35%	49%	41%	17%
Not Safe At All	0	0	0	12%	0	16%	74%
Don't Know/No Answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, February 2006, p. 30.

Note: Responses not shown where they are 3 percent or below.

Figure 7.8 Iraqi Perceptions of Safety by Area, February 2006

The ABC-Time-Oxford Research International polling results also found that only 43 percent of Sunnis described their lives as good versus 86 percent for Shi'ites. Only 9 percent of Sunnis felt things in Iraq were going well versus 53 percent for Shi'ites. Only 7 percent of Sunnis felt the United States had a right to invade versus 59 percent for Shi'ites. Only 11 percent of Sunnis said they felt "very safe" versus 80 percent for Shi'ites.[15]

Public opinion polls showed that the December 15, 2005, election did little to weaken Sunni support for the insurgency or sectarian and ethnic divisions within Iraq. The ABC-Time-Oxford Research International polling in December 2005 found that Sunni attitudes on security versus those of other ethnic and sectarian groups were as follows:

> Sixty-one percent of Iraqis now say they feel security is better than it was before the war; that represents a 12 percent increase since we last asked, and a fairly startling counterweight to the prevalent view in the press. Having said that, these numbers are driven almost entirely by Shi'ites and Kurds who were treated so brutally under Saddam Hussein.
>
> . . . By contrast, among Iraq's Sunnis—for whom "security" was almost ironclad under Saddam—a whopping 90 percent report their security is worse today. In 2005, the majority of insurgent attacks have been concentrated in four of Iraq's 18 provinces, which are home to roughly 45 percent of the country's population: Ninevah, Al Anbar, Baghdad and Salah ah Din. Attacks have focused primarily on members of the Iraqi Security Forces, members of the Multinational Forces, Iraqi civilians and government officials—as well as foreign diplomatic and media personnel.[16]

Sunni attitudes were particularly polarized in Al Anbar, the western province where the insurgency is strongest. Only 1 percent of those polled felt the U.S. invasion was a good thing, and no respondent placed any faith in U.S. or Coalition forces. Nearly 50 percent of those polled in Al Anbar called instability their greatest problem. This was more than 17 percent more than in the other Sunni provinces. Only 13 percent said their local security situation was good, and only 28 percent expected it to improve. Only 20 percent of those polled approved of the new constitution, although 60 percent did believe the December 15, 2005, elections would produce a more stable government.

Moreover, the ABC analysis of the December 2005 ABC-Time-Oxford Research International poll found that Sunnis saw a steady deterioration in their provinces when they were asked about whether conditions were good, as shown in Figure 7.9.

The poll also showed civil war was now a growing popular concern. A total of 37 percent said that a lack of security, chaos, civil war, internal trouble, or division of the country was the worst thing that could happen to Iraq in the next year. An additional 12 percent cited terrorism. Some 9 percent of Iraqis polled said that the worst thing would be for Coalition forces **not** to leave the country.

Iraqi Attitudes toward U.S. and Iraqi Forces

The mid-December ABC-Time Oxford Research International poll made it equally clear that voting in the election did not mean an endorsement of the U.S. and the Coalition, regardless of what faction Iraqis voted for:

> Half of Iraqis now say it was wrong for U.S.–led forces to invade in spring 2003, up from 39 percent in 2004.
>
> The number of Iraqis who say things are going well in their country overall is just 44 percent, far fewer than the 71 percent who say their own lives are going well. Fifty-two percent instead say the country is doing badly.
>
> There's other evidence of the United States' increasing unpopularity: Two-thirds now oppose the presence of U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq, 14 points higher than in February 2004. Nearly six in 10 disapprove of how the United States has operated in Iraq since the war, and most of them disapprove strongly. And nearly half of Iraqis would like to see U.S. forces leave soon.

Figure 7.9 Are Local Conditions Good? Change in Results from 2004 to 2005

Area Polled	All	Shi'ite	Sunni	Mixed	Kurdish
			(In Percent)		
Overall conditions of life	+1	+21	−26	+6	−4
Crime Protection	+13	+7	−22	+45	+13
Security	+12	+22	−19	+29	+14
Jobs	+12	+31	−12	+16	+9

Source: ABC News Poll: Where Things Stand, "Poll Finds Broad Optimism in Iraq, But Also Deep Divisions Among Groups," ABC News, December 23, 2005.

> Specifically, 26 percent of Iraqis say U.S. and other Coalition forces should "leave now" and another 19 percent say they should go after the government chosen in this week's election takes office; that adds to 45 percent. Roughly the other half says coalition forces should remain until security is restored (31 percent), until Iraqi security forces can operate independently (16 percent), or longer (5 percent).[17]

Sectarian differences also grew over the role of Iraqi security forces. Sunni faith in the Iraqi Army fell by 13 percent between mid-2004 and the winter of 2005, while Shi'ite faith increased by 22 percent. In December 2005, Sunnis were 50 percent less confident in the Iraqi Army than Shi'ites and 23 percent less confident in the police.

The WorldPublicOpinion.org poll found similar results.[18] Figure 7.10 shows that the majority polled did not approve of attacks on Iraqi forces, however, although 24 percent of Sunnis "approved somewhat." The majority also thought that Iraqi forces still needed foreign help, with most thinking that they would need help for two years. Iraqis were evenly divided over whether they wanted the United States to pull out in six months or two years. Sunnis generally wanted a quicker exit than Shi'ites or Kurds.

Some 47 percent of all Iraqis approved of attacks on U.S.–led forces, versus 7 percent approved of attacks on Iraqi forces, and roughly 1 percent approved of attacks on Iraqi civilians. Some 41 percent of Arab Shi'ites, 16 percent of Kurds, and 88 percent of Arab Sunnis approved of attacks on U.S.–led forces.[19] Almost all Iraqis wanted U.S.–led forces to leave Iraq: 35 percent wanted withdrawal by July 2006, and 70 percent wanted withdrawal in two years.

Once again, however, there were striking differences. Only 22 percent of Arab Shi'ites wanted the United States to withdraw in six months, although 71 percent wanted withdrawal in two years. Some 13 percent of Kurds wanted the United States to withdraw in six months, and only 40 percent wanted withdrawal in two years. In the case of Sunnis, however, 83 percent wanted the United States out in six months and 94 percent in two years.[20] When the question was asked differently, Iraqis seemed somewhat less divided. A total of 29 percent were willing to wait and reduce U.S. forces only when the situation improved in the field. This included 29 percent of Arab Shi'ites, 57 percent of Kurds, and 29 percent of Arab Sunnis. This at least in part reflected concerns about the quality of Iraqi forces.

These results provided a powerful warning about just how important making the Iraqi government and Iraqi forces inclusive would now be in defeating the insurgency and provoking civil conflicts. They also provided a warning that many Sunni Iraqis feared that the Iraqi forces did support the Shi'ites and attacks on Sunnis, and feared that Iraqi forces might divide and become Shi'ite and Kurdish forces in an intense civil war. Iraqis had very mixed views about how soon Iraqi forces would be ready to take over the mission.

The MNF-I included in the Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report found that 35 percent of all Iraqis wanted U.S.–led forces to withdraw in six months (83 percent Sunnis), and 35 percent more in two years (11 percent Sunnis).[21] Iraqis also were relatively confident about the impact of such

Figure 7.10 Iraqi Attitudes toward U.S. and Iraqi Forces in Early 2006

(Support Shown in Percent)	Total	Kurd	Shi'ite Arab	Sunni Arab	Other
Attacks on U.S. Forces in Iraq					
Strongly Approve	23	8	9	77	5
Approve Somewhat	24	8	32	11	38
Disapprove Somewhat	29	18	41	9	24
Strongly Disapprove	23	63	18	3	31
Attacks on Iraqi Government					
Strongly Approve	1	–	2	–	0
Approve Somewhat	6	–	2	24	2
Disapprove Somewhat	27	13	19	52	47
Strongly Disapprove	66	86	78	24	51
Attacks on Iraqi Civilians					
Strongly Approve	–	–	0	0	0
Approve Somewhat	1	–	1	0	0
Disapprove Somewhat	4	1	5	5	0
Strongly Disapprove	95	98	94	95	100
What Should the New Iraqi Government Ask the United States to Do about U.S.–Led Forces?					
Withdraw all in six months	35	13	22	83	36
Gradually withdraw in two years	35	28	49	11	14
Reduce only as security situation improves	29	57	29	4	46
Would the United States Withdraw in Six Months If Asked by Iraqi Government?					
Would	23	17	32	5	14
Would Not	76	77	67	944	82
How Capable Are Iraqi Security Forces?					
Strong enough now	39	22	45	38	33
Still need foreign help	59	73	55	58	67
How Much Longer Will Iraqi Forces Need Foreign Help?					
1 year	21	5	25	21	25
2 years	26	31	21	31	33
3 years or more	12	33	8	5	7

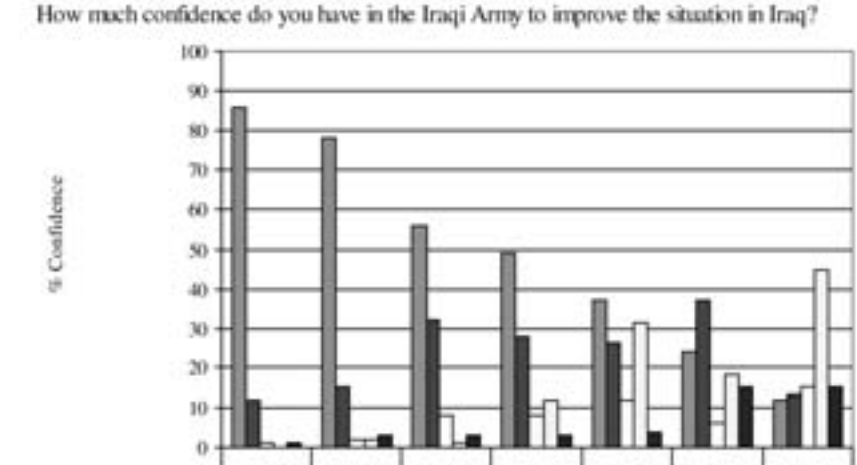
Note: The results for "refuse to answer" or "don't know" have been deleted. The percentages are too small to be relevant.

Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "What the Iraq Public Wants: -A WorldPublicOpinion.org Poll-," January 2–5, 2006, sample of 1,000, with 150 Sunni Arab over-sample.

withdrawals. Some 35 percent thought U.S. withdrawals would increase the number of violent attacks (13 percent Sunnis), 34 percent thought crime would rise (12 percent Sunnis), and 33 percent thought interethnic violence would increase (18 percent Sunnis). A total of 73 percent felt U.S. withdrawal would increase the willingness of factions in the National Assembly to cooperate (62 percent Kurds, 69 percent Arab Shi'ites, and 87 percent Arab Sunnis).

At the same time, only 39 percent felt Iraqi forces were ready to deal with security challenges on their own (38 percent Sunnis). A total of 21 percent felt Iraqi forces would need help from outside forces for another year (21 percent Sunnis). A total of 26 percent felt Iraqi forces would need help from outside forces for two years (31 percent Sunnis), and a total of 12 percent felt Iraqi forces would need help from outside forces for three years or more (5 percent Sunnis). Figure 7.11 breaks down confidence in the Iraqi Army and Figure 7.12 shows confidence in the Iraqi police.

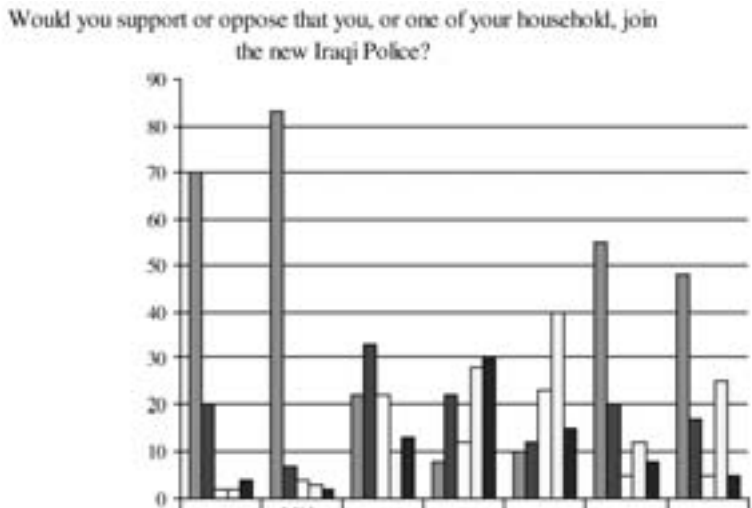
The good news for both Iraq's political and force development was that there was more unity about the need to avoid attacks on Iraqi forces and civilians. Only 7 percent of Iraqis approved attacks on Iraqi forces and 93 percent disapproved. Even among Sunnis, only 24 percent "approved somewhat," and 76 percent disapproved, of which 24 percent disapproved strongly. When it came to attacks on Iraqi civilians, 99 percent disapproved. So few Sunnis approved that the results for "approve" were not statistically meaningful. Nearly 100 percent disapproved, of which 95 percent disapproved strongly.



	Mid-Euphrates	South	Kurdish Areas	Baghdad	Tikrit/Baquba	Kirkuk	Mosul
Great Deal	86	78	56	49	37	24	12
Fair Amount	12	15	32	28	26	37	13
Not very much	1	2	8	8	12	6	15
None at all	0	2	1	12	31	18	45
Don't know/no answer	1	3	3	3	4	15	15

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense report to Congress, February 2006, p. 31.

Figure 7.11 Iraqi Support and Confidence in the Iraqi Army



	South	Mid-Euphrates	Tikrit/Baquba	Kirkuk	Mosul	Kurdish Areas	Baghdad
Strongly Support	70	83	22	8	10	55	48
Somewhat Support	20	7	33	22	12	20	17
Somewhat Oppose	2	4	22	12	23	5	5
Strongly Oppose	2	3	10	28	40	12	25
Don't Know/ No Answer	4	2	13	30	15	8	5

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, February 2006, p. 31.

Figure 7.12 Support for the Iraqi Police

THE IMPACT OF THE ELECTION ON THE SUNNI INSURGENCY

Once again, some observers were initially optimistic about this election as they had been immediately after the first one. Such observers said that the Sunni turnout, and the lack of violence on Election Day, was a turning point in the Iraqi political process. Some aspects of the results were positive. The Sunni turnout in certain provinces increased compared with the January elections earlier in the year. For example, in Anbar Province 86 percent of voters turned out, an increase from 2 percent in the January elections of that year.[22] The Sunni provinces of Ninawa and Salahaddin saw voter turnout at levels of 70 and 98 percent, respectively, in December. This was an increase from 17 and 29 percent, respectively, in January. Nationally, voter turnout increased from 58 percent in the January elections to 77 percent in December.[23]

The U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Peter Pace, was asked whether elections would sap the insurgency shortly in January 2006. He stated, "The opportunity in the future for folks who are against the government to hide, to store weapons and the like will go down. So I do believe that over the course of

the coming year, that violence will subside."[24] Pace stressed, however, that the general Iraqi population would have to play a significant role. With regard to how long the insurgency could maintain its past level of violence, Pace stated,

> I think that depends on the Iraqi people. I think it depends on how comfortable these terrorists feel moving about the towns and cities in Iraq. I think if the Iraqi people demonstrate to the terrorists that they're not welcome in their cities, that they are not welcome in their towns, that murderers—which they are—murderers of fellow Muslims, indiscriminate murderers that they are—are not welcome, that will reduce the number of [insurgents].[25]

Pace also stated that the possibility of U.S. troop withdrawals in early 2006 would depend on the decisions of U.S. commanders on the ground.

The fact was, however, that Sunnis did not have to choose between political participation and aiding the insurgency. Many Sunnis voted more to assert Sunni power than because of any support for the Iraqi political process. Some Sunni insurgents hedged their bets by continuing to carry out attacks while engaging in political talks with the Iraqi government. In fact, one counterinsurgency expert at the Pentagon suggested that a number of Sunnis had adopted a model similar to the Irish Republican Army's dual-track strategy of continuing violence while using the Sinn Fein to pursue political solutions.[26]

The Department of Defense provided an optimistic characterization of the insurgency in its February 2006 quarterly report. It again stated that the insurgency was growing weaker and Iraq was moving toward unity:

> A noteworthy indicator of progress in the security environment has been the enemy's inability to derail the political process and to foment large-scale ethno-sectarian violence.
>
> Rejectionists, Saddamists, and Terrorists have failed to achieve their common operational objectives to:
>
> - Derail the political process
> - Foment large-scale ethno-sectarian violence
> - Deter development of the Iraq Security Forces
> - Damage Iraqi public trust in the Iraq Security Forces
> - Expand the conflict regionally
> - Widen their political support among the Iraqi people
> - Force the premature disengagement of the Coalition
>
> . . .Since the last report, some Sunni rejectionist groups recognized that not participating in the January 2005 elections was a strategic mistake. Even as they continued to use or condone violence, they attempted to advance their agendas through political means; they succeeded in convincing great numbers of their Sunni supporters to vote in the October referendum and in the December 2005 elections. . .It has also paved the way for separating those Sunnis willing to accept and work with the new Iraqi regime

from those irrevocably committed to violent overthrow of the new Iraq and rule by the privileged and unelected few.[27]

The report elaborated on the growing divide between al-Qa'ida and the more "nationalist" Sunni insurgents due in part to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and affiliated organizations' "overkill" attacks on Iraqi civilians:

> These developments put Sunni rejectionist groups at odds with al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, which remain intractable and opposed to democracy. The September 14, 2005, al-Qa'ida in Iraq declaration of "War on Shi'a" was the final wedge that split the bond between al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and the Sunni rejectionists. The November 2005 Amman, Jordan, bombing further alienated Iraqi Sunnis and regional Arabs who had given either overt or tacit support to the insurgency. The resulting fracture alters the dynamics of the insurgency in Iraq. Previously, the strategies of Sunni rejectionists, al-Qa'ida, and its affiliates were largely complementary. Now, the two groups' lines of operation are divergent and increasingly opposed.
>
> . . .These developments—coupled with successful Coalition operations to disrupt terrorist networks in Ninawa and Anbar provinces—have combined to change the nature of the collective enemy forces, and, as a result, the overarching term "insurgency" is less of a useful construct today. Previous synergy among enemy groups is breaking apart. Saddamists remain a potential long-term threat due to historical success in seizing power through infiltration and subversion although it is difficult to determine their current capabilities. Al Qa'ida and its affiliates are moving into an increasingly isolated violent position, while Sunni Arabs appear to be moving toward increased political participation.

The February report did, however, pay more attention to the risk of civil war than pervious reporting. It stated that while this was a concern, sectarian conflict remained minimal and that the risk was often exaggerated:

> Terrorist groups have so far failed to create widespread sectarian conflict, despite this being a clear goal of some. Terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has publicly advocated attacks that intensify sectarian tension and has "declared war" on the Shi'a. Al Qa'ida in Iraq has killed thousands of Shi'a men, women, and children throughout the year in a series of bloody suicide attacks against mosques, markets, and other locations where Shi'a gather in large numbers. Ministry of Interior security units, which are majority Shi'a and Arab and which are suspected of being penetrated to some degree by Shi'a militias, have carried out attacks against and detention of Sunni Arabs that are suspected Ba'athists. Ethnic tensions also exist in northern Iraq between Kurds and ethnic minorities, including Turkomans, Assyrians, and Chaldeans.
>
> The number of estimated sectarian incidents is low when compared to total attacks, but the brutal methods used and the media coverage of these incidents increase concerns that sectarian violence could escalate. Government power sharing, integration of ISF [Iraqi security forces], and events such as the recent reconciliation conference in Cairo are just some of the initiatives underway to defuse sectarian tensions.
>
> Classifying violence as "sectarian" is frequently a matter of perception; it is often difficult to differentiate between attacks on citizens in general (including tribal and local

vendettas, and pure criminal activity) and those specifically targeting members of a particular sect. To date, the level of sectarian violence has been sporadic, but ethno-sectarian attacks may increase in an effort to provoke reprisals. Iraqis may counter violence with localized protection "militias," discussed earlier. Positive statements from religious and political leaders will continue to help damped violent reactions to such provocations.

Some U.S. officers provided a more mixed and more realistic assessment of the situation. The departing Commander of U.S. forces in Baghdad, Maj. Gen. William G. Webster, Jr., assessed the situation in the capital at the end of 2005 that mixed a list of successes with present and future challenges:

- The insurgency has weakened since the election, and while overall attacks increased in 2005, successful attacks decreased 10 percent. Military operations cut the number of car bombs in Baghdad in half and have uncovered double the amount of weapons caches.
- Insurgents were resorting to drive-by shootings, mortar and rocket attacks that were less accurate and therefore less successful.
- There is a need to focus Coalition efforts on training Iraqi forces to operate according to the rule of law and with respect to human rights, in addition to promoting a more even ethnic and sectarian balance in the forces.
- The United States planned to increase the number of American advisors, then ten, working with each Iraqi police battalion in order to "plan, train, coach . . . and conduct operations with them."
- The United States planned to replace the 3rd Infantry Division in Baghdad with a smaller force led by the 4th Infantry Division. As areas of Baghdad are ceded to Iraqi security forces, the U.S. Division would reduce its presence in the city.[28]

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) also summarized the status of the insurgency after the elections in more cautious terms:[29]

The insurgency intensified through October 2005 and has remained strong since then. As we reported in March 2005, the insurgency in Iraq—particularly the Sunni insurgency—grew in complexity, intensity, and lethality from June 2003 through early 2005.

According to a February 2006 testimony by the Director of National Intelligence, insurgents are using increasingly lethal improvised explosive devices and continue to adapt to coalition countermeasures . . . enemy-initiated attacks against the coalition, its Iraqi partners, and infrastructure increased in number over time. The highest peak occurred during October 2005, around the time of Ramadan and the October referendum on Iraq's constitution. This followed earlier peaks in August and November 2004 and January 2005. According to a senior US military officer, attack levels ebb and flow as the various insurgent groups—almost all of which are an intrinsic part of Iraq's population—rearm and attack again.

As the administration has reported, insurgents share the goal of expelling the coalition from Iraq and destabilizing the Iraqi government to pursue their individual and,

at times, conflicting goals. Iraqi Sunnis make up the largest portion of the insurgency and present the most significant threat to stability in Iraq. In February 2006, the Director of National Intelligence reported that the Iraqi Sunnis' disaffection is likely to remain high in 2006, even if a broad, inclusive national government emerges. These insurgents continue to demonstrate the ability to recruit, supply, and attack coalition and Iraqi security forces. Their leaders continue to exploit Islamic themes, nationalism, and personal grievances to fuel opposition to the government and recruit more fighters.

According to the Director, the most extreme Sunni jihadists, such as al-Qa'ida in Iraq, will remain unreconciled and continue to attack Iraqi and coalition forces. The remainder of the insurgency consists of radical Shia groups, some of whom are supported by Iran, violent extremists, criminals, and, to a lesser degree, foreign fighters. According to the Director of National Intelligence, Iran provides guidance and training to select Iraqi Shia political groups and weapons and training to Shia militant groups to enable anti-coalition attacks. Iran also has contributed to the increasing lethality of anti-coalition attacks by enabling Shia militants to build improvised explosive devices with explosively formed projectiles, similar to those developed by Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah.

THE CREATION OF THE MUJAHEDEEN SHURA COUNCIL

The Sunni population now began to split between an increasingly neo-Salafi Islamist extremist-dominated mix of insurgents and more "nationalist" insurgents. A Mujahedeen Shura Council was created in January 2006 that combined al-Qa'ida in Iraq with five other insurgent groups and appointed an Iraqi named Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi as its head. In the months that followed, it curtailed its claims of attacks against Iraqi civilians and cooled its rhetoric against Shi'ites.[30]

Experts and analysts differed over whether to interpret this as a shift in tactics or a change in strategy. Some U.S. officials acknowledged that there was no way to tell whether this council, or its leaders such as al-Baghdadi, even existed. One intelligence analyst indicated that it was simply the latest piece of propaganda by al-Qa'ida: "It's a shift in tactics, not a real change."[31] Others, such as Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at RAND Corporation, suggested that the organization and its affiliates were real, but cast doubt on al-Zarqawi's assertion that he had abdicated control of al-Qa'ida in Iraq.[32]

The United States and the Iraqi government carried out a psychological campaign, aimed primarily at the Iraqi people, sought to drive a wedge between al-Zarqawi's network and other Iraqis and insurgent groups by portraying him as a foreign terrorist whose tactics included killing Iraqi civilians and destroying the country's infrastructure. Playing off Iraqi nationalism and xenophobia, this effort was characterized by some within U.S. military headquarters in Iraq as "the most successful information campaign to date."[33]

Al-Qa'ida countered with a tape of Ayman al-Zawahiri posted to the Internet in April 2006, which praised al-Zarqawi and urged Iraqi insurgents to remain united behind him:

> The Nation of Islam, I ask you to support your brothers, the mujahideen in Iraq, and our brother, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, about whom I didn't see anything but good things the whole period I knew him . . . Your enemy is now dizzy, and do not stop fighting until he is defeated by the grace of God.[34]

The tape, however, appeared to have actually been made in November 2005. This was months after al-Zawahiri is alleged to have written a letter advising al-Zarqawi to curb his attacks against Shi'ites and reminding him that the battle is one for the hearts and minds of Muslims. It also was posted at a time when it appeared al-Zarqawi was keeping a lower profile and had placed al-Qa'ida in Iraq under the Mujahedeen Shura.[35]

U.S. AND NEW IRAQI GOVERNMENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH NATIONALIST INSURGENTS

Few Sunnis saw the election results as just. The Sunnis received only about 20 percent of the seats in the election, and most Sunni leaders felt this share was too small. Many complained about "fraud" and that they were being allotted fewer seats than their Shi'ite counterparts. Some Sunni insurgents and antigovernment leaders also made it clear that they could participate in many aspects of the political process *and* support the insurgency.

Nevertheless, several reports in early January 2006 indicated that some progress was taking place and that U.S. and Iraqi government officials were able to hold much more productive dialogues with the insurgency. These talks involved Sunni Arab nationalists who resented the occupation and were fearful of being marginalized under a Shi'ite-dominated government. Both sets of officials stressed that no commitments were made to this group and that they would not enter into talks with foreign terrorists and pro-Saddam elements. Furthermore, officials were adamant that they would not talk with figures that the intelligence services identified as having been implicated in lethal attacks on U.S. and Iraqi forces.[36] Although the identities of the insurgent groups and figures involved in the talks were not identified, the *New York Times* listed Muhammad's Army and the Islamic Army in Iraq as the likely groups because they were nationalist and were comprised of former Ba'athists.[37]

Despite the talks, U.S. officials did not believe that a lasting cease-fire or significant demobilization of the more nationalist insurgent bands was imminent because such groups wanted the United States to establish a timeline for withdrawal. Nonetheless, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad stated in an interview in the spring of 2006 that U.S. officials had held talks with some groups linked to the insurgency and that he believed these talks were one of the reasons that the number of attacks against U.S. troops declined during that period.[38]

This U.S. effort to reach out to part of the Sunni nationalist insurgency took place on two levels. On the political level, U.S. officials hoped to bring the nationalist insurgents into the political process, which would encourage them to give up violence. On another level, the United States appeared to want to turn the nationalists

against the foreign fighters and al-Qa'ida affiliates by focusing on the differences between the insurgent groups.

As one Western diplomat stated, "According to Islamic doctrine, as well as democratic principles, there cannot be a legitimate resistance against a legitimate government. If we can reach an understanding with each other, meaning the resistance, as they call it, and the Coalition, then they in turn will take care of Zarqawi and the terrorists."[39] In the talks, U.S. representatives repeatedly asked the location of al-Qa'ida elements and whether the nationalist elements would be willing to help root them out.

Some of these efforts had already been made public in December 2005. The United States released 20 prominent Sunni detainees along with Satam Quaood, a former Saddam supporter. Though U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad stressed that the move was not an attempt to mollify Sunni insurgents, they reportedly took the release as a sign of good will and became more open to talks.[40] While such prisoner releases may have softened some aspects of the Sunni insurgency, they provoked an outburst of protests by Shi'ites against Ambassador Khalilzad and Iraqi Sunni leaders.

These negotiations also forced a response from the Islamist insurgents. A tape attributed to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi that was released on an Islamist Web site in early January seemed to be an apparent response to such efforts by Iraqi and U.S. officials, as well as Arab states. Al-Zarqawi sharply criticized Iraqi Sunnis and Arab countries for working for the formation of a unifying coalition government in Iraq. The speaker attacked the Arab League Summit in November that brought the various Iraqi factions together in Egypt. Reuters quoted the speaker as saying, "The countries that met in Cairo . . . were involved in destroying Iraq and cooperated with America by opening their land, air space and waters and offering intelligence to it."[41] The speaker explained that they had not attacked polling stations during the election so as not to hurt Sunnis while denouncing the Sunni Iraqi Islamist Party for supporting the Iraqi constitution.

This effort seems to have interacted with the backlash al-Zarqawi had provoked by his earlier extremisms and "declaration of war" against the Shi'ites. An announcement on a Web site frequently used by al-Qa'ida in early 2006 indicated that al-Zarqawi had abdicated his position as "emir" on the Mujahedeen Council in favor of an Iraqi.[42] In a video broadcast on the Internet, al-Zarqawi appealed to Muslim clerics in Iraq and asked for their support in his movement.[43] Although it was most likely an attempt by al-Qa'ida in Iraq to put an "Iraqi face" on what was seen by many as a foreign-led Islamist extremist movement, the levels of communication, cooperation, and conflict between the various insurgent movements remained unclear.

The Iraqi government attempted to take advantage of this cleavage, reaching an agreement with six Sunni nationalist insurgent groups. In exchange for reconciliation talks, these groups pledged to denounce al-Zarqawi's al-Qa'ida movement.[44] Although such efforts had little practical impact and clashes between hard-line insurgents and other Sunnis were rare, Iraqi National Security Advisor Mowaffak Rubaie

indicated that he believed such incidents were on the rise and reflected an increasing intolerance among Iraqis of foreign-led groups operating in their country.

Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, a U.S. military spokesman in Baghdad, echoed these sentiments and emphasized that six "major leaders" had been killed by other indigenous insurgent groups since September 2005 and suggested that the "local insurgents had become part of the solution."

Other reports indicated that members of the Albu Mahal tribe, who had formerly clashed with Coalition forces, began directing U.S. troops to locations of al-Qa'ida hideouts in the Syrian border area. In Ramadi, Abu Khatab, a high-ranking al-Qa'ida member, was run out by insurgents loyal to local tribes.[45] In Samarra, local leaders launched a campaign to hunt down al-Qa'ida members in a response to the assassination of Hikmat Mumtaz, the leader of the Albu Baz tribe.[46]

It is important to note, however, that any such shifts in Sunni nationalist positions, and their infighting with Islamist extremists, did not have a discernable effect on the overall level of violence in Iraq. In a ten-day period in January, insurgents attacked U.S. forces 113 times in Ramadi, the supposed primary area of this division among foreign- and domestic-led groups.[47] Jeffrey White, a former U.S. intelligence officer, suggested that "even if we can exploit this rift" between insurgent groups, "it doesn't mean they stop fighting us."[48]

THE ROLE OF THE SHI'ITES

The level of Arab Shi'ite resentment and anti-Sunni violence also continued to grow. As has been touched upon earlier, the Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" for February 2006 was less ambiguous on the role that Shi'ite militias played in the violence. It declared that the "presence of militias is a continuing threat to the rule of law and a potentially destabilizing influence on both security and governance."[49]

The Department of Defense expressed growing concern over the "integration" of these militias into Iraqi security force (ISF) units. In the October 2005 report, it assessed that "the realities of Iraq's political and security landscape work against completing the transition and re-integration of all Iraqi militias in the short-term."[50] In the February 2006 report, however, the self-integration of the militias into government security forces now caused the U.S. government growing concern. The report stated that while "not inconsistent with the official policy," it may result "in security forces that may be more loyal to their political support organization than to the central Iraqi government of constitution."[51]

Shi'ite Intentions and Unity

The United Iraqi Alliance, the Shi'ite coalition party, had won 5.2 million votes and 128 seats in the parliament. This vote showed that the UIA was clearly the dominant faction in Iraqi politics. Ahmed Chalabi did not succeed in capturing a large part of the Shi'ite vote or convincing other groups he stood for an effective secular or national program. His new party captured only a token vote in most areas.

At the same time, the results did not provide a picture of how effective the main Shi'ite parties would be in using power or how the individual Shi'ite parties would behave and cooperate. The UIA was an awkward umbrella coalition of Shi'ite parties after the election. Its key parties were the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the Islamic Al-Da'wah or Da'wa Party, and members of Moqtada al-Sadr's movement. This coalition suffered from serious internal tensions that became apparent immediately after the election, and there were several attempts in the months that followed by members in Da'wa and SCIRI to reduce al-Sadr's control.

The existing Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, was seen as ineffective and weak. Many felt that Deputy President Adel Abdul Mahdi had emerged as a strong potential leader. It would take until May for the UIA to nominate a concensus candidate for prime minister.

The UIA also did not come into office with a clear mandate. As has been discussed earlier, national polls before the election showed less support for a religious type of government at the national level, and local reporting showed some dissatisfaction with local religious governments. However, hard-line Shi'ite factions controlled Basra and a significant part of Baghdad, and even if the national leaders had cohesive positions, it was not clear how well they would speak for local government and politics in the Shi'ite-dominated provinces.

Al-Sadr, the December 2005 Elections, and the New Government

Al-Sadr continued to present a growing problem and pursued both military and political strategies. He had entered into a political alliance with the two largest Shi'ite parties in the country on the very same day his forces battled militias in Bismaya. Because of the deal, Sadr-backed candidates appeared on the same ticket alongside members of the Shi'ite-led government in the December elections. This was a reversal from al-Sadr's earlier pledge to support the elections, but not to support any particular list of candidates.

Although U.S. officials were initially encouraged by al-Sadr's pledge to support the December 15 elections, al-Sadr continued to refuse to disband his militia, which grew in power and influence in the fall of 2005. There were also reports that many Mahdi members joined the police and other government security forces, contributing to the already fragmented nature of the ISF.

As a result of the December 15 elections, al-Sadr's group was awarded more than 30 seats in the parliament. Al-Sadr supported al-Jaafari for the permanent prime minister position. This *de facto* political alliance between al-Jaafari and al-Sadr created tensions within the UIA and with the United States. Al-Jaafari's relationship with al-Sadr became al-Jaafari's primary base of support, but only at the cost of tying him to al-Sadr and alienating him from many leaders in SCIRI, Da'wa, and the United States.

Moqtada al-Sadr also visited several of Iraq's neighbors after the December 2005 elections. Although he was not an elected official, al-Sadr frequently met with heads

of state and often made statements in which he appeared to be speaking on behalf of the Iraqi people or government.

In Saudi Arabia, al-Sadr asked King Abdullah II to press the United States to commit to a date of withdrawal from Iraq. In late January, amid international tensions over Iran's nuclear program, al-Sadr made a statement of solidarity with Tehran during a visit, pledging to come to the defense of the country from an attack by an outside aggressor.[52] Although he did not elaborate, this statement was made amid ongoing negotiations to form a coalition government and exacerbated Sunni fears of a "Shi'ite crescent" based on a Shi'ite-dominated Iraqi government aligned with Iran.

In February 2006, al-Sadr visited President Bashar al-Assad of Syria. This was followed by a trip to Jordan where al-Sadr said in an interview with al-Jazeera that there was "nothing good" in Iraq's new constitution. In Lebanon, al-Sadr professed that he had come to promote peace and "to improve relations between the Syrian people and the Lebanese people."[53]

Insurgent Pressure on the Shi'ites to Move toward Civil War

Al-Sadr's rising influence coincided with growing sectarian violence, a grindingly slow pace of political process, and deteriorating economic conditions, all of which helped push Iraq further toward civil war. In early January 2006, violence spiked again, killing nearly 200 people in two days. One suicide attack occurred at a Shi'ite shrine in Karbala, killing 63 and wounding 120. As political groups attempted to construct a governing coalition, protests broke out in Sadr City where over 5,000 Shi'ites condemned the violence and chastised Sunni leaders. SCIRI issued a warning to the Sunni insurgents that its patience was wearing thin and that it may use the Badr Organization to conduct retaliation attacks. Izzat al-Shahbandar, an official with the Iraqi Accordance Front, the main Sunni coalition party involved in the negotiation process, remarked that the current Shi'ite-dominated government was acting as an "accomplice" in the ongoing violence by pursuing sectarian policies and strengthening militias.[54]

According to Aya Abu Jihad, the owner of a store in Baghdad, "People are being killed because they are Shi'ites, and others are killed because they are Sunnis."[55]

Some senior Iraqi government officials believed that the wave of sectarian violence posed a greater threat to stability than did the possible rejection of the draft constitution by a majority of Iraqis: "The government now is so inefficient at controlling the situation that the security situation has deteriorated, and so the political situation has deteriorated. . . They have to get security under control, otherwise [the constitution] is not going to matter." A former general in the Iraqi army known as Abu Arab echoed that sentiment, saying, "People don't want a constitution—they want security."[56]

At the same time, senior Shi'ite and Kurdish politicians did still press for a peaceful political solution and for an inclusive unity government. Even relative hard-line Shi'ite politicians like Abdel Aziz al-Hakim called for more care on the part of Shi'ite

forces in dealing with Sunnis. On February 8, 2006, he called for Iraq's security forces "to continue strongly confronting terrorists but with more consideration to human rights." The Shi'ite holiday of Ashura passed in early February 2006 without any major incidents or attacks. In the two previous years, however, insurgents killed over 230 Shi'ites.

The United States focused on these positive indicators despite acts of sectarian violence. The Department of Defense reported in February 2006 that the overall number of incidents remained low when compared with total attacks. However, it did not rule out the possibility that this would remain the case in the future. Additionally, it stated that sectarian violence is "frequently a matter of perception" and that it was difficult to distinguish between attacks on citizens in general and those intentionally aimed at a particular sect.[57]

Militia Infiltration into Iraqi Security Forces

At the beginning of 2006 it was clear that accusations of "retaliation killings" and the implication of Shi'ite-dominated Ministry of Interior (MOI) and security forces in acts of violence perpetrated largely against Sunni Arabs were steadily increasing sectarian tensions and moving the country closer toward civil war. This had become a prime concern for U.S. Maj. Gen. William G. Webster, Jr., who stated during a press briefing that one of the most important focuses of the U.S. military in Iraq in the coming months would be to train Iraqi forces to operate within the rule of law and with respect for human rights. In addition, he called for efforts to promote "a greater ethnic and sectarian balance within those forces" and a "spirit of national service."[58] In an attempt to address these concerns, the United States tripled the number of training teams being attached to Iraqi police forces.

Shi'ite and Sunni tensions had an impact on U.S. efforts to develop Iraqi forces as well. In December 2005 the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Division, deployed to Baghdad, had to threaten to demote the readiness rating of an Iraqi Army division scheduled to take over part of the Green Zone and to suspend the transfer of authority indefinitely when Iraq's Defense Ministry refused to confirm the appointment of Col. Muhammed Wasif Taha, a Sunni. U.S. Col. Edward Cardon, commander of the 3rd Infantry's 4th Brigade, defended the decision saying, "The hand-over was contingent upon their leadership remaining where it was."[59] Although the Defense Ministry eventually capitulated and confirmed Taha as the commander of the brigade, a spokesman for the ministry indicated that it still had the right to replace Taha at a later date.[60]

Abuses of power by Shi'ite-dominated security forces also presented new problems in the south. In the predominately Shi'ite city of Basra, British troops arrested 14 Iraqi law enforcement officials, including two senior police intelligence officers, in late January 2006. While several were released, the British reported those who remained in custody, including the deputy chief of intelligence for Basra, had been involved in political corruption, assassinations, and bomb-making.

Prisoner and detainee abuse continued to be a problem. In a February 2006 Department of Defense (DoD) report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," police, military and justice detention facilities were singled out as being "typically maintained at higher standards than those of the Ministry of Interior facilities." The report also suggested that to correct the "imbalance," joint U.S.–Iraqi "teams will continue to inspect Iraqi detention facilities, with appropriate remediation through Iraqi-led triage and follow-up logistical, security, public relations, and political support."[61]

THE KURDISH QUESTION: UNCERTAIN KURDISH UNITY

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the two main rival Kurdish groups, decided to present a more united front after the election and work together for the benefit of the Kurdish region. The Kurds have long had a saying that "the Kurds have no friends." History has shown that this saying should have been "the Kurds have no friends including the Kurds."

Time after time, the Kurds had sabotaged themselves and this had previously been true of the KDP and the PUK. The Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani factions had fought on several occasions, and there was a state of civil war between them during 1993–1995. PUK forces were able to take control of Irbil in 1994 and put an end to the first attempt to create a unified and elected government that began in 1992. Barzani's KDP collaborated with Saddam Hussein in 1995, when Hussein sent a full corps of troops into Irbil and other parts of the area occupied by Talabani. Tens of thousands of Kurds and anti-Saddam activists fled the area, and the United States did not succeed in brokering a settlement between the two factions until 1998.[62]

Despite those past and current tensions and divisions between the PUK and the KDP, however, leaders from both parties signed an agreement in January 2006, which allotted 11 ministerial posts to each group. Minority parties were skeptical of KDP-PUK promises to give remaining posts to political factions that did not win a majority and worried that this further isolated them from any future role in the political process.[63]

Voting in the Kurdish Areas

The Kurdish Alliance won 2.6 million votes and 53 seats. These results provided a strong indication of Kurdish strength, and the two main Kurdish political parties in the ruling coalition of Barzani and Talibani—the KDP and the PUK—seemed likely to emerge with around 20 percent of the vote. They also succeeded in dominating the Kurdish vote in the election and keeping smaller parties like Islamic Union from winning a meaningful number of seats.

The voting did not reveal how many Kurds still wanted independence, the level of tension in the Kurdish-dominated areas over issues like oil and Kirkuk, the level of tension between the Barzani and Talabani factions, or the level of tension with other ethnic groups like the Turkomans.

Accordingly, the results did not serve as a prediction of how the Kurds would behave or the role they would play in the new government. Before the election, Jalal Talabani said the presidency would be a hollow part of the new government structure. It was also clear that the Kurds feared that Arab Shi'ites may become more interested in compromise with Arab Sunnis than with the Kurds.

The struggle for control of oil resources and revenues was also a major issue. The flow of aid money that previously helped keep the KDP and the PUK unified to the extent there had only been minor armed clashes was increasingly uncertain. The Kurds faced serious revenue issues as oil for food and other aid phased down. They also had lost most of their revenue from smuggling after Saddam fell when the Coalition Provisional Authority virtually abolished most Iraqi tariffs.

POSTELECTION: PRELUDE TO INCREASED VIOLENCE

Given this combination of weak political leadership and conflicting factional interests and fears, it is scarcely surprising that it was soon apparent that the elections had not limited insurgent activity and violence and that sectarian violence continued to increase. Insurgent attacks continued in the form of suicide bombings, political assassinations, and "body dumps" against mainly Shi'ite Arabs. Car bombs and gunfire attacks also targeted Iraqi police forces. Revelations and accusations of "revenge killings" perpetrated by the Shi'ite-dominated MOI forces against the Sunni population exacerbated sectarian and ethnic tensions throughout talks to form a new government.

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari did denounce the growing level of violence as an attempt to undermine efforts to construct a governing coalition. Other senior officials, like President Talabani, also called for unity and an inclusive government. Despite such calls for continued cooperation, however, members of both the Sunni and Shi'ite coalition parties made public statements that threatened efforts at creating an inclusive government. SCIRI issued a warning to Sunni elements of the insurgency that its "patience is wearing thin" and hinted that it may use militias such as the Badr Brigade to carry out revenge attacks against suspected insurgents.

In Sadr City, over 5,000 Shi'ite Muslims protested in the streets on January 7 to condemn the suicide attacks and moderate Sunni leaders, while voicing support for the Ministry of Interior.[64] Izzat al-Shahbandar, an official with the Iraqi Accordance Front, the main Sunni coalition party involved in the negotiation process, remarked that the current Shi'ite-dominated government was acting as an "accomplice" in the ongoing violence by pursuing sectarian policies and strengthening Shi'ite-controlled militias.[65]

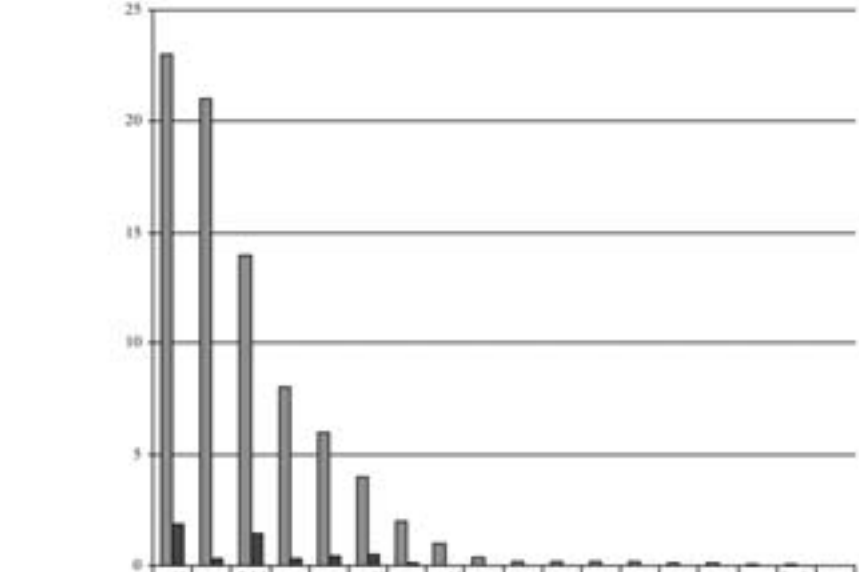
There were also growing reports of Shi'ite militiamen and MOI forces carrying out violence against Sunnis. For example, in the Sunni neighborhood of Tobji, armed men in MOI police uniforms killed three Sunnis and abducted more than 20 others.[66] One of the few released, Yasser Khalil, told his story to an AP reporter:

> They took us away and put us into a room in a building I didn't recognize, where they beat us and asked us questions about who we were. They then took a few of us in their

cars and dumped us on the eastern outskirts of Baghdad, saying if we said anything or looked at them they would kill us.[67]

Sunni religious and political leaders increasingly condemned these "Shi'ite" attacks. Sunnis speculated over whether the attackers were agents of the MOI, or gunmen wearing ministry police uniforms, a tactic that had been used by insurgents in other instances. Sunni cleric Ahmed Abdul Ghafour al-Samarrai highlighted in a speech what he saw as a dilemma for Sunnis in the face of both a hostile Shi'ite-dominated MOI police force and U.S.–led Coalition forces attempting to wage a counterinsurgency campaign: "Should an Iraqi man surrender? If he surrenders, he will be detained and tortured. If he resists, he will be considered a terrorist."[68]

The violence also had a growing economic impact. In its February 2006 report to Congress, the Department of Defense indicated that while attacks on Iraq's infrastructure "account for an extremely small portion" of overall attacks and continued to go down, "the severity of the attacks has gone up" and the "enemy has become more proficient at targeting critical infrastructure vulnerabilities and at intimidating



	-Al Anbar	Baghdad	Salah-ad Din	Ninawa	Diyala	Al Tamim	Babil	Al Basrah	Maysan	Thi Qar	Qadisiyah	Karbala	Wasit	Najaf	Muthanna	Arbil	Sulaymaniyah	Dahuk
Total attacks	23	21	14	8	6	4	2	1	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.05	0.05	0.03
Attacks Per Capita	1.85	0.3	1.41	0.3	0.41	0.5	0.1	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	NA	NA	NA

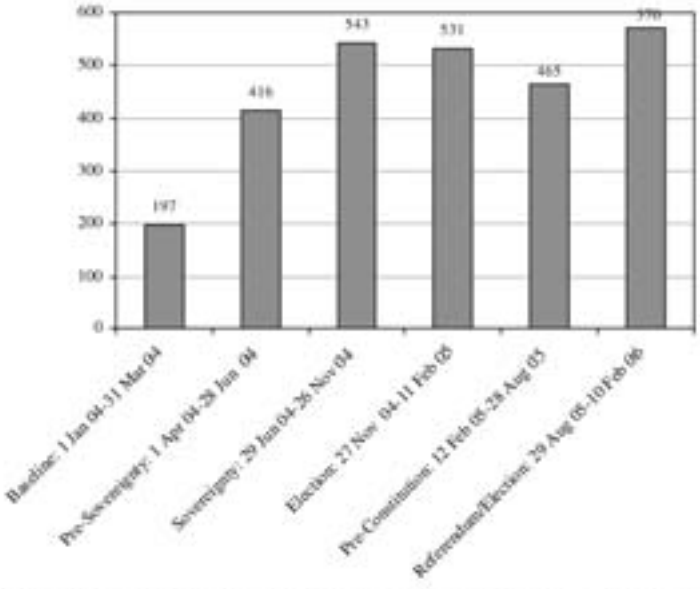
Source: Adapted from "Measuring Stability in Iraq, February 2006," Report to Congress in Accordance with the Defense Appropriations Act 2006 (Section 9010), February 2006, p. 26

Figure 7.13 Attacks by Iraqi Governorate or Province: August 29, 2005–January 20, 2006

workers, such as truck drivers, who are essential to distribution of oil and essential services."[69] Attacks on Iraq's infrastructure were key to undermining Coalition and Iraqi government reconstruction efforts.

- Figure 7.13 shows the shifting patterns in attack by province from August 29, 2005, to January 20, 2006. It shows that only 4 provinces accounted for 83 percent of the attacks—a consistent pattern since the early days of the insurgency, although some 43 percent of the total population lived in these provinces. It also shows that 12 provinces, with some 50 percent of the population, received only 6 percent of the attacks.
- Figure 7.14 shows the growing number of average weekly attacks by political period. Whatever the benefits of democratization might have been, the sectarian and ethnic divisions of the country clearly were not bringing peace.
- Figure 7.15 shows Coalition and Iraqi force fatalities, and it is important to stress the number of wounded was three to five times higher, and that while no accurate counts of civilian casualties existed, they were clearly rising more quickly than Coalition and ISF losses.

The Department of Defense identified the following trends in attack patterns in its February 2006 report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq:"[70]

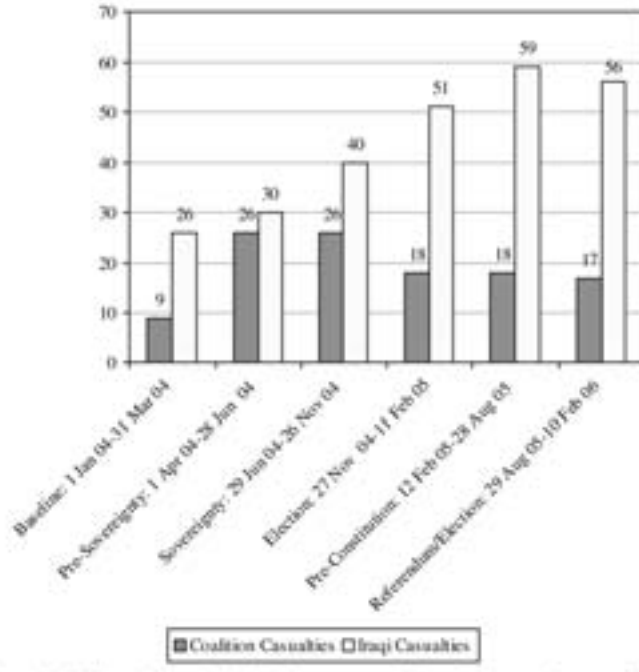


Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, October 13, 2005; February 2006.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD reports.

Note: The May and August 2006 documents did not include a "Baseline" period.

Figure 7.14 Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004–February 2006



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, October 13, 2005, p. 24, February 2006.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD reports.

Note: The data are derived from unverified initial reports submitted by Coalition elements responding to an incident. These numbers should be used for comparative purposes only. The May and August reports noted that ISF were included in the totals for Iraqi casualties.

Figure 7.15 Average Daily Casualties—Iraqi and Coalition: January 2004–February 2006

- Over the last quarter of 2005, the overall number of improvised explosive device (IED) attacks trended downward.
- Three-quarters of insurgent attacks resulted in no casualties or serious damage.
- Eighty percent of attacks were directed at Coalition forces, but Iraqis suffered three-quarters of all casualties.
- Insurgent attacks range from a single insurgent executing one attack to a highly coordinated attack using different weapons systems. However, there were only four of the more sophisticated attacks in the six months prior.
- In the period between September 17, 2005, and January 20, 2006, 23 percent of car bombs were intercepted and defused. This was an increase from 17 percent in the three months prior.

THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE STATES: THE SYRIAN "GAME"

Syria had an Alawite-led regime that was more Shi'ite than Sunni, and while it saw its support of Sunni insurgents as a way of weakening the potential threat from a

U.S. presence in Syria, it also maintained ties to Shi'ite factions as well. While it tolerated and encouraged former Iraqi Ba'athist operations in Syria, and transit by Islamist extremists, Syria also maintained ties to elements of formerly Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'ite groups like SCIRI, Al-Da'wa, and Al-Da'wa-Tanzim al-Iraq that it first developed during the Iran-Iraq War. Syria's crackdown on fighters passing into Iraq through its borders, an effort praised by U.S. military officials, was likely the result of broader national security interests and concerns about regime stability.[71]

Despite some academic speculation that the Syrian government was on the brink of reform, the trends in early 2006 suggested the opposite. Far from opening the Ba'ath-dominated rule to a multiparty system, Syria implemented new oppressive measures against political opponents and sought methods to co-opt religious elements of society. Fearing the gathering momentum of Islamic political parties such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood—each of which had electoral victories in Palestine and Egypt, respectively—the Ba'ath Party of Syria attempted to head off similar challenges in its state by allowing religious figures a greater role in government and giving them a freer hand to conduct their business among their followers so long as it did not attempt to rival the Syrian government.[72]

8

The Attack on the Askariya Shrine and the Increase in Low-Level Civil War: February 22–May 20, 2006

February 22, 2006 An attack occurs on the 1,200-year-old Shi'ite Askariya shrine in Samarra, Iraq. The bombing destroys the golden-domed shrine, which was one of the most sacred for Iraqi Shi'ites. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq claims responsibility for the attack. This sets off an unprecedented spasm of sectarian violence. At least 47 bodies of both Shi'ites and Sunnis are found across Iraq the following day. More than 90 Sunni mosques are attacked with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades, burned, or taken over by Shi'ites in the following weeks, the Sunni Arab Iraqi Islamic Party says.

February 28, 2006 A pair of bomb attacks in the poor, mostly Shi'ite Jadida district leaves 27 dead and 112 injured. A car bomb strikes near a small Shi'ite mosque in the Hurriya district of central Baghdad, killing 25 and injuring 43. Another detonates by remote control near a small market in the mostly Shi'ite Karada district, leaving 6 dead and 18 injured.

March 2, 2007 U.S. Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch confirms that since the Golden Mosque bombing there have been 33 attacks on mosques, with two destroyed and seven sustaining significant damage; 319 Iraqi civilians have been killed in street violence; and Iraqis have held 21 protests with over 1,000 people, the majority of which were peaceful.

March 16, 2006 The new Iraqi parliament convenes for the first time. There is still an ongoing debate to select the next prime minister.

April 7, 2006 Three suicide bombers target the Baratha mosque in Baghdad, a primary headquarters for the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), killing more than 80 and wounding more than 140. The Iraqi Health Ministry claims that 90 are killed and over 170 wounded. At least two of the bombers are dressed as women to hide the bombs and slip into the mosque as the worshippers leave. The first bomb detonates at the main exit, and the second inside the mosque as people rush back in for safety. Ten seconds later, the third bomb explodes.

A RISE IN LOW-LEVEL CIVIL WAR

The spring of 2006 removed any doubt that Iraq now faced a civil war as well as an insurgency. On February 22, insurgents brought sectarian violence to a new and dramatic height. They attacked the 1,200-year-old Askariya shrine in Samarra, a Shi'ite holy landmark, destroying its golden dome but causing no deaths. The destruction of the shrine, which housed the graves of two revered Shi'ite imams, caused an unprecedented wave of sectarian violence in Iraq. The shrine attack caused an immediate sharp increase in sectarian fighting, displacements, and intimidation that had been building over the past two years. In its Human Rights Report, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq stated that since the bombing, "there has been a marked deterioration in the security environment, resulting in hundreds of cases of killings, torture, illegal detention and displacement."[1] It went on to characterize the violence that ensued in subsequent days:

> Numerous killings reportedly took place, including public executions by militias, in Al-Baldiat, Sadr City and Al-Sha'ab areas of Baghdad. Street clashes and assaults by armed groups continued for days. Many individuals were reportedly detained at improvised checkpoints, or were abducted from homes and mosques. Several of those illegally detained were later found dead, often bearing signs of severe torture . . .
>
> In retaliation for the Samarra bombing, a significant number of Sunni mosques were reportedly attacked, destroyed or damaged and clerics were among those assassinated. Such attacks did not seem to have been spontaneous but rather revealed a degree - of organization and the face that the perpetrators had readily access to resources and equipment . . .
>
> . . . members of all communities were negatively affected by the unleashed violence and tit-for-tat attacks.[2]

The attack was well organized as well as carefully targeted. Officials in Iraq reported that security forces had arrested as many as ten individuals suspected of being involved in the bombing in the days following the attack.[3] According to initial investigations of the damage, it appeared that the mausoleum's four main pillars were packed with explosives. These explosive charges were then connected together and linked to a detonator, triggered from a distance. Jassem Mohammed Jaafar, Iraq's

Construction Minister, stated that this was a sophisticated operation and rigging the explosives would have taken at least 12 hours.[4] Later studies showed that some 20 men had occupied the mosque at night and spent hours systematically planting some 400 pounds of explosives.

U.S. officials indicated on Saturday that Coalition troops had more than quadrupled their patrols from 65 on Wednesday to 268.[5] Whether this was because Iraqi forces were unable to handle the increased violence or whether it was intended simply as a reassurance or force multiplier to aid Iraqi troops was unclear.

Observers at first differed over just how serious a step the attack was in pushing the country toward civil war. U.S. Department of States Spokesman Adam Ereli asserted that the violence, and Iraqi's reaction to it, was an "affirmation" of a successful U.S. policy in Iraq. Ereli said,

> You've got political leadership acting together on behalf of the common good, and you've got security forces demonstrating that capability and a responsibility as a national entity that we've been working to develop and that has now been put to the test and, I think, is proving successful.[6]

Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch echoed these sentiments saying, "We're not seeing civil war ignited in Iraq . . . We're seeing a competent, capable Iraqi government using their security forces to calm the storm."[7] On the Sunday morning talk show *Face the Nation*, National Security Advisor Stephen J. Hadley said that Iraqis had "stared into the abyss a bit, and I think they've all concluded that further violence . . . is not in their interest."[8]

These views contrasted sharply with those of Tariq al-Hashimi, the leader of the Sunni- dominated Iraqi Accordance Front, who called the reaction of the government's security forces "miserable and ashamed" and said that "as usual [they were] either audience or participant."[9] Other reports similarly noted that Iraqi security forces (ISF) were either unable or unwilling to stop attacks by militias.[10]

Other officials in the United States were less optimistic, or simply more realistic. Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said that the violence was a pothole rather than a bump in the road and that the United States and Iraq will "find out if the shock absorbers in the Iraqi society will hold or whether this will crack the frame."[11] Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice took a similar approach and played down the hot button issue of civil war saying, "I don't think we do the Iraqi people any good, or really that we are fair to them, in continually raising the specter that they might fall into civil war."[12]

Some Iraqis portrayed the violence in a similar light. Hassan al-Bazzaz, a political science professor at Baghdad University said, "We are on the brink of either solving our problems or falling into a hole from which it would be very difficult to climb out." He added, "This might be a turning point for all of us. If not, everyone will pay a very high price . . . there will be no exceptions."[13] However, almost one month after the attack, Iraq's former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi told BBC New, "It is unfortunate that we are in a civil war."[14]

There were similar differences over responsibility for the attack. U.S. officials, and the majority of their Iraqi counterparts, indicated that the blame was probably the result of actions by a neo-Salafi extremist group like al-Qa'ida. In an interview on CNN, Iraq's National Security Advisor, Mowaffak al-Rubaie, stated that the attack was the "blueprint" of al-Qa'ida.

No group immediately claimed the attack, and speculation varied depending on who was asked. One Iraqi man blamed Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Militia for the attack.[15] In fact, some Shi'ites condemned that attack, while also assigning blame to their own sect.[16] Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, an official with the Sunni political party the Iraqi Consensus Front, also accused the Shi'ites of planning the attack and the retaliatory violence that followed saying, "We think what happened yesterday was organized. It had all been organized the night before."[17]

The Mujaheddin Shura Council, a council of Islamic extremist insurgent groups in Iraq, which included al-Qa'ida, issued a statement blaming the attack on the Iraqi government's cooperation and close relationship with Iran. The group also indicated that it was preparing a "shocking" response to the "conspiracy."[18]

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad blamed the attack on the United States and Israel, saying during a TV broadcast, "These heinous acts are committed by a group of Zionists and occupiers that have failed."[19]

Regardless of who was responsible, the response pushed the country toward large-scale civil war.[20] Hundreds of Iraqis were killed in the violence that followed the attack on the Golden Mosque, and Shi'ites responded with more violence against Sunnis. Frequent targets during this period were mosques, schools, headquarters of political parties, and hospitals, along with Shi'ite- or Sunni-dominated neighborhoods and large public places in general. While U.S. soldiers were killed and many attacks were aimed at Iraqi police and military forces, the violence was largely perpetrated against Iraqi civilians and appeared to be sectarian in nature.

This cycle included a mix of past methods of attack used to cause mass casualties against civilians and Iraqi security forces such as car bombs and suicide bombers, but also there was an increase in low-level civil conflict including mystery killings, body dumps, and assassinations carried out both by Sunnis and Shi'ites. But the low-level nature of many of the attacks made it difficult to impossible to determine with certainty the perpetrators of much of the violence or why the victims were chosen.

Although it is difficult to accurately assess the level of violence actually triggered by the attack on the Golden Mosque, there were numerous confirmed attacks that did occur during the first five days following the attack:

- February 22, 2006: In Al Amin, southeast of Baghdad, gunmen set fire to a house believed to be the residence of Sunni militants.
- February 22, 2006: Gunmen identified as Mahdi fighters drove into Al Shabab and attacked Ibad Al Rahman, a Sunni mosque, kidnapped a man inside, and set the mosque on fire.
- February 22, 2006: Seven U.S. soldiers were killed by roadside bombs.

- February 23, 2006: An attack on a Sunni mosque in Baquba killed eight Iraqi soldiers and wounded nearly a dozen people.
- February 23, 2006: Forty-seven people, both Sunnis and Shi'ites, were forced from their vehicles by gunmen and shot; their bodies were dumped in a ditch near Baqubah. Many were on their way to protest the shrine bombing. Included among these bodies were three Iraqi journalists.
- February 23, 2006: In Basra, militiamen broke into a prison, hauled out 12 inmates (including 2 Egyptians, 2 Tunisians, a Libyan, a Saudi, and a Turk) and shot them.
- February 23, 2006: The Sunni clerical Association of Muslim Scholars said 168 Sunni mosques were attacked, 10 imams were killed, and 15 were abducted.
- February 23, 2006: Gunmen opened fire on a Sunni mosque in Baquba, where police were guarding access to the mosque.
- February 23, 2006: At a Shi'ite demonstration in Kirkuk, police found and defused a dozen explosive devices.
- February 24, 2006: Three Sunni mosques in southern Baghdad were attacked and mortar rounds landed near the Shi'ite shrine of Salman al-Farisi in the town of Salman Pak, 20 miles south of the capital.
- February 24, 2006: Gunmen stormed a house south of Baghdad and shot dead five Shi'ite men.
- February 24, 2006: Two more rockets exploded in the British Embassy compound in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, causing minor injuries to two British workers.
- February 24, 2006: Police found at least 27 bodies in Baghdad and other cities and towns.
- February 24, 2006: In Samarra, a roadside bomb killed two policemen.
- February 25, 2006: Three police commandos died when the funeral of a prominent Iraqi television journalist killed in the violence was ambushed in western Baghdad.
- February 25, 2006: Gun battles erupted around a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad after Ministry of Interior (MOI) forces dispatched to protect the mosque came under fire from gunmen inside.
- February 25, 2006: The bodies of 14 slain police commandos were found near their three burned vehicles near a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad, and 11 other bodies were discovered in various locations across Baghdad.
- February 25, 2006: A car bomb killed four people in the Shi'ite holy city of Karbala.
- February 25, 2006: Thirteen members of a Shi'ite family were massacred in the town of Baquba.
- February 25, 2006: Two rockets slammed into Baghdad's Shi'ite slum, Sadr City, killing three people, including a child, and wounding seven.
- February 25, 2006: Twenty-one other people died in small-scale shootings and bombings in Baghdad and western areas of the city.
- February 26, 2006: At least seven mortar rounds hit in a Shi'ite enclave of Dora, a predominantly Sunni Arab district and one of the most dangerous parts of the city police said. Fifteen people were reported killed and 45 were injured.

- February 26, 2006: Two more mortar rounds crashed into homes in the city's eastern Shi'ite-dominated neighborhood of Hurriyah, killing three civilians and injuring six others.
- February 26, 2006: A group of soccer players stumbled upon three bodies in Mahmoudiya, south of Baghdad. The victims had been cuffed, blindfolded, and shot in the head and the chest.
- February 26, 2006: In Madain, southeast of the capital, a roadside bomb exploded near a police patrol, killing one officer and injuring two others.
- February 26, 2006: In Ramadi, gunmen shot dead an ex-general in Saddam Hussein's army as he drove his car through the Sunni-insurgent stronghold.
- February 26, 2006: In Hillah, a Shi'ite-dominated city in Babil, a bomb exploded at a crowded bus station, injuring five people.
- February 26, 2006: A bomb exploded in a Shi'ite mosque in Basra, causing minor injuries.
- February 26, 2006: U.S. soldiers were killed when a roadside bomb struck their vehicle in western Baghdad.
- February 28, 2006: A pair of bomb attacks in the poor, mostly Shi'ite, Jadida district left 27 dead and 112 injured. In the first incident, a man wearing an explosives belt targeted a gas station. Five minutes later, the first of at least five car bombs in the capital exploded near a group of laborers. A car bomb struck near a small Shi'ite mosque in the Hurriya district of central Baghdad, killing 25 and injuring 43. Another detonated by remote control near a small market in the mostly Shi'ite Karada district left 6 dead and 18 injured. In the upscale Sunni Arab district of Zayona, a car bomb targeting an army patrol killed five, while a car bomb targeting a convoy for an advisor to the Defense Ministry, Daham Radhi Assal, injured three. Elsewhere, a car bomb targeting a police patrol on the road between Kirkuk and the capital killed four civilians.
- February 28, 2006: In the Hurriya district, gunmen blew up a Sunni mosque without causing casualties.
- February 28, 2006: Attackers damaged a mosque in Tikrit that houses the remains of Hussein's father.
- February 28, 2006: A mortar shell landed near the offices of Baghdad TV, a satellite channel operated by the Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni faction. Two employees were injured.
- February 28, 2006: Authorities in Baquba discovered nine bodies, each shot in the head.
- February 28, 2006: Two British soldiers were killed and another injured when their Land Rover was blown up by a roadside bomb while on patrol in the Iraqi town of Amara.

Similar attacks continued into March and beyond. Baghdad, a mixed city, became particularly violent. In the month after the Askariya attack, the murder rate in the city tripled from 11 per day to 33 per day. During this same time period, U.S. military officials indicated that 1,313 Iraqi civilians had been killed, and 173 of those

deaths were the result of car bombs.[21] In the period from March 7 until March 21, 2006, over 191 bodies were found, many of them blindfolded, mutilated, and shot in the head.

The general deterioration in security had in the wake of the bombing also led more average Iraqis to turn to small arms for their own protection. With this increase in demand came an increase in price. The price of a Russian-made AK-47 increased from $112 before the Askariya attack to $290 afterward. The price of hand grenades almost doubled to $95.[22]

Continuing sectarian violence in April 2006 brought together religious leaders from both Sunni and Shi'ite sects to try and halt the bloodshed and prevent Iraq from descending into civil war. Held under the auspices of the Arab League, the conference was to take place in Amman. Organizers of the conference, strongly backed by King Abdullah II, said that the meeting would generate a declaration against sectarian violence signed by both Shi'ite and Sunni leaders.[23]

Mosque bombings by Sunni insurgents also continued in April. On April 6, a car bomb exploded near the sacred Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, killing 10 and injuring 30. The very next day, three suicide bombers targeted the Baratha mosque in Baghdad, a primary headquarters for SCIRI, killing over 80 and wounding more than 140. At least two of the bombers were dressed as women to hide the bombs, and they slipped into the mosque as the worshippers left. The first bomb detonated at the main exit, and the second inside the mosque as people rushed back in for safety. Ten seconds later, the third bomb exploded.[24]

Although Shi'ite leaders called for calm, the attacks underscored the continuity of violence in Iraq, put greater pressure on political leaders to form a coalition government, and increased pressure on Ibrahim al-Jaafari to step down in favor of a less divisive leader.

In its May report to Congress, the Department of Defense provided the following perspective on the violence of that day and the increased sectarian violence in Iraq:

> The February 22 bombing of the Golden Mosque of Samarra produced an upsurge in sectarian and militia violence but did not produce the civil war hoped for by its perpetrators. Iraqi government and religious leaders were united in condemning the attacks and in restraining sectarian unrest. The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) also played a key role, operating effectively and with restraint. The performance of the ISF was critical to halting the spread of violence, keeping the perpetrators of the bombing from achieving their broader strategic goal. Although polls indicated that a majority of Iraqis were concerned that sectarian violence could spread to become civil war, the same polls indicated that perceptions of neighborhood safety remained relatively unchanged. This view reflects data that indicate that more than 80 percent of terrorist attacks were concentrated in just 4 of Iraq's 18 provinces. Twelve provinces, containing more than 50 percent of the population, experienced only 6 percent of all attacks.[25]

The report noted other changes in the nature of the threat facing Coalition forces and Iraqis, and the growing state of civil conflict:

> Anti-government and anti-Coalition violence in Iraq derives from many separate elements, including Iraqi Rejectionists, former regime loyalists (including Saddamists), and terrorists, such as al-Qa'ida in Iraq. Other violence comes from criminal activity and sectarian and inter-tribal violence. Each of these groups has divergent and often incompatible goals; however, some groups collaborate at the tactical and operational level. Enemy elements may engage in violence against one another as well as against the Coalition. Sectarian and inter-tribal violence may not target Coalition forces at all. Therefore, to categorize violence in Iraq [as] a single insurgency or a unified "opposition" is both inaccurate and misleading. . . It is unlikely that the Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces will make progress against each of these violent factions at the same pace.[26]

The May report was markedly different from its February predecessor in several of its assessments.[27] Whereas in February the goals and operations of "rejectionists" and "Islamists" were "divergent and increasingly opposed," the DoD now emphasized their resumed collusion. In addition, the Saddamists, once considered "a potential long-term threat," were in May "no longer considered a significant threat." Perhaps most importantly, while downplaying the possibility of civil war, the report nonetheless noted the increase in sectarian violence that it previously had relegated as a "matter of perception" and now included Shi'ite militias as rejectionists, a category previously reserved for Sunnis.

By the late spring of 2006, U.S. officials had become notably less optimistic and more concerned about civil war. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad warned that a major civil war remained a serious possibility. U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated that Iraq "is not in civil war at the present time." He did, however, admit the risk and summarize U.S. policy plans for responding if civil war should break out: "The plan is to prevent a civil war, and to the extent one were to occur, to have the . . . Iraqi security forces deal with it to the extent they're able to."[28]

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Peter Pace, characterized Iraq as "a place that is having some real difficulties right now." He also gave a more balanced assessment that seemed to indicate that whether civil war occurred or not was a function of a collective Iraqi decision: "Everything is in place if they [Iraqis] want to have a civil war. . . everything is also in place if they want to have a united, unified future."[29]

Gen. John Abizaid told a Senate committee, "There's no doubt that the sectarian tensions are higher than we've seen, and it's a great concern to all of us." He added that the nature of the security situation in Iraq was changing "from insurgency toward sectarian violence." He later clarified this in the context of the U.S. mission in Iraq saying, "sectarian violence is a greater concern for us security-wise right now than the insurgency."[30]

Iraqi officials were even more frank. On March 19, former Iraqi Prime Minister Allawi stated in a BBC interview, "It is unfortunate that we are in civil war. We are losing each day as an average 50 to 60 people throughout the country, if not more. . . If this is not civil war, then God knows what civil war is." Allawi said the violence in the country was moving toward "the point of no return" and that Iraq was "in a terrible civil conflict."

That same day, President Jalal Talabani stated the following in another BBC interview:

> I cannot deny the danger of it, but I don't think that now it's that serious. It was very close after the evidence of what happened in Samarra against these two holy shrines, but nowadays I think that it is far from (certain)...I am afraid of another Samarra, it would lead to some kind of clashes. What is very good and we can say it will be a big obstacle to civil war is the leaders of all parties and groups are against civil war, they are working towards calming down the streets and to bring the people together...People are feeling now that there are more sectarian problems, the life conditions are not so good, the levels of danger, many people are trying to leave the country
>
> ...I am optimistic because Iraqis have got no choice. There is no possibility of dividing Iraq. Take Kurdistan. Kurdistan cannot be independent while all the neighboring countries are against. Arabs of Iraq, Sunnis don't want to separate Iraq they are dreaming to come back and rule the country. Shi'ites think that they are the majority, they think they have the right to rule the country for that there is no possibility for internally and also the international community and the regional governments are not permitting any kind of division of Iraq. For that I am very optimistic that Iraq will remain, and if we can achieve as much as possible peace and security with democracy and federation we will have a strong and united Iraq.

THE IMPACT OF PROBLEMS IN CREATING A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT

Progress was far too slow in moving from the election to actually forming a government. In late January the two dominant Shi'ite and Sunni political blocs, United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) and the Iraqi Accordance Front, entered into talks and publicly announced a list of potential nominees for prime minister in the next government. These included Interim Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Adil Abdul-Mahdi of SCIRI, nuclear physicist Hussein al-Shahrastani, and Fadhila Party representative Nadim al-Jabiri.[31]

Post-election violence complicated many aspects of the effort to create an inclusive government. For example, the control of the Defense Ministry and Interior Ministry posts at the cabinet level became an even more contentious issue between the Shi'ite-dominated United Iraqi Alliance and the mostly Sunni Iraqi Accordance Front. Adnan al-Dulaimi, the leader of the Iraqi Accordance Front, stated that he believed the appointment to the positions should be "kept away from any sectarian and political considerations"[32] and accused the MOI forces of engaging in "sectarian cleansing" in Baghdad. Hadi al-Amri, the head of the Badr Brigade, the militia associated with SCIRI, responded that faced with "daily slaughter" the Shi'ites "will not relinquish security portfolios."[33]

The bombing of the Askariya shrine and the sectarian violence that followed threatened the progress of forming an inclusive government. However, Iraqi political figures called on the country to recognize that the attack was an attempt to create a civil war and urged Iraqis to be calm.

President Jalal Talabani said the day of the attacks, "We are facing a major conspiracy that is targeting Iraq's unity . . . we should all stand hand in hand to prevent the danger of a civil war." U.S. President George W. Bush echoed these sentiments saying, "The terrorists in Iraq have again proven that they are enemies of all faiths and of all humanity . . . the world must stand united against them, and steadfast behind the people of Iraq."[34] President Bush also pledged U.S. assistance to rebuild the damaged shrine. Unlike the "activist" al-Sadr, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani told his followers that attacks on Sunni mosques were forbidden.[35]

President Bush spoke with the leaders of the seven major political factions by phone and urged them to reinstitute talks. Afterwards, Sunni leaders agreed to meet with their Shi'ite and Kurdish counterparts. Later that evening, Prime Minister al-Jaafari, accompanied by the leaders of the other major coalitions, announced at a press conference that that country would not allow itself to engage in civil war and that this was a moment of "terrific political symbolism."[36]

The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, warned that future U.S. support of the Iraqi government and aid would be dependent upon the success of the government's efforts at creating an inclusive arrangement. Al-Jaafari responded that the new government would not be sectarian, "Not because the US ambassador says this and warns us, but because this is our policy."[37]

A leading Sunni coalition party suspended talks to form a coalition government and issued a list of demands that had to be met in order for negotiations to continue. These demands, which were met shortly, included the imposition of a curfew, a denunciation of violence by the Iraqi government, and a return of the Sunni mosques occupied by Shi'ite militias.[38]

The Jaafari Crisis: Politics While Iraq Burns

The first meeting of Iraq's 275-member Council of Representatives took place on March 16, 2006, amid rising sectarian violence. The meeting itself was largely ceremonial and lasted just over 30 minutes. According to Iraq's constitution, the country then had 60 days to form a government, yet many issues critical to the formation of a unity government had yet to be resolved between the various political factions.[39]

One of the most contentious decisions by the dominant Shi'ite bloc was the nomination of Ibrahim al-Jaafari to again serve as prime minister. Al-Jaafari was widely seen as weak, incompetent, narrowly pro-Shi'ite, and unfit to serve as prime minister. Sunnis, Kurds, and some secular members called for a new nomination by the United Iraqi Alliance.[40] The resulting debate over al-Jaafari's nomination did much to effectively block political progress because the new assembly could not elect its own officials or take up new business until it reached an agreement on the makeup of its new leadership.[41] Al-Jaafari did state after the meeting nominating him that he would step down from his position as prime minister "if the people ask me [to]." In practice, however, he hung on to his nomination and this helped block the ongoing negotiations between the various political groups.

One of the initiatives aimed to achieve this end was the formation of a 19-member National Security Council to set policies pertaining to the army and police forces, the counterinsurgency campaign, and the disarmament and dissolution of Shi'ite militias. Two of the positions in the council would go to the president and the prime minister with the remaining seats being distributed to parties in proportion to their representation in parliament.[42]

The council's relationship with the cabinet, chosen by the prime minister, was unclear because the constitution did not provide for the formation of such a council. In fact, Kurdish leaders first suggested the council in January as a check on Shi'ite power. Although the UIA initially resisted it as unconstitutional, pressure from the other political parties and Ambassador Khalilzad caused it to reluctantly acquiesce. Still, it did so only on the grounds that decisions will require the approval of 13 members, which for the foreseeable future gives the Shi'ites "veto" power as long as they remain unified within the council.[43]

U.S. frustration with al-Jaafari's reluctance to rein in Shi'ite militias became increasingly vocal and, in return, so did Shi'ite accusations of political bullying on the part of the United States. This tension was worsened by allegations that U.S. and Iraqi military forces raided a mosque, killing worshippers loyal to al-Sadr. In late March, Ambassador Khalilzad stated that President Bush "doesn't want, doesn't support, doesn't accept" al-Jaafari as the next prime minister. Although U.S. officials in Baghdad did not elaborate on the statement, they did not dispute its authenticity.[44] Representatives from al-Jaafari's office immediately condemned the remark. "How can they do this?" Hadier al-Ubady, a spokesman for al-Jaafari asked. "An ambassador telling a sovereign country what to do is unacceptable."[45]

By April 2006, the divisions within the United Iraqi Alliance over al-Jaafari, and increasing U.S. pressure to form a government, began to cause members of the Shi'ite coalition to withdraw their support from the prime minister. In April, a senior Shi'ite politician, Kassim Daoud, called for al-Jaafari to step down.[46] One day later, Sheik Jalaladeen al-Sagheir, a deputy to the SCIRI's leader Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, declared that he was officially suggesting another candidate to replace al-Jaafari.[47] Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, however, urged the Shi'ite political parties to form a government quickly but also to support al-Jaafari and maintain their unity.[48] At the same time, Kurdish leaders officially informed the UIA that they had decided to reject al-Jaafari as their nomination for prime minister.[49]

A surprise visit by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and U.K. Foreign Secretary Jack Straw in early April was designed to impress upon Iraqi politicians the urgency of forming an inclusive government. This may have had the effect of further hardening al-Jaafari's insistence that he remain in office. Their visit came at a time when the United States had become increasingly vocal in its preference for another prime minister. This, and the fact that both Rice and Straw seemed to have a more amicable meeting with Adel Abdul Mahdi, likely caused al-Jaafari to view their visit as an indirect attempt to influence Iraqi leaders and unseat him from his position.

In fact, al-Jaafari's top advisor, Haider al-Abadi, reflected these exact sentiments saying, "pressure from outside is not helping to speed up any solution . . . all it's doing

is hardening the position of people who are supporting Jaafari." Specifically addressing the U.S.–British diplomatic envoy he said, "They shouldn't have come to Baghdad."[50] Al-Jaafari himself said, "There is a decision that was reached by a democratic mechanism, and I stand with it."[51]

The UIA attempted to break the deadlock on April 10, 2006, by sending a three-member delegation to persuade Sunni and Kurdish political groups to support al-Jaafari's nomination. These efforts failed and the groups continued to press for another candidate, saying they would not join a new government under al-Jaafari's leadership.[52] They also helped lead to a political imbroglio that created a weak factional government that faced major problems in taking decisive action toward conciliation and in virtually every other area affecting Iraqi security.

Two days later, Adnan Pachachi, the acting parliament speaker and a Sunni, who was still a member of Allawi's party, announced that he would convene the legislature the following week to continue with the democratic process and force the parties to decide on a prime minister. Pachachi added that he was told by Shi'ite politicians that they hoped to resolve the issue before the parliament met.[53]

Fearing that this meeting could create open divisions within the Shi'ite alliance, and dissolve its power as the most dominant bloc, the UIA countered that the names of those nominated for the top posts in government must be agreed upon beforehand. Shi'ite political leaders justified this move by asserting that convening a parliamentary session would be of little use if individuals were not already selected to hold positions within a government. This tactic of insisting on approval of the nominations to important government posts before a legislative meeting tried to shift the burden of agreement back to the Sunnis and the Kurds. Shi'ite politicians requested that representatives from each main political bloc meet that Sunday, the day prior to the parliamentary meeting, to discuss possible nominations.[54]

That weekend, both secular leaders from Ayad Allawi's party as well as top Shi'ite clerics attempted to broker last-minute agreements. Allawi announced on Iraqi television that politicians might have to create an "emergency government" in order to save Iraq from "its current deadly crises."[55]

Adnan Pachachi, who had previously announced his intentions to convene the body on Monday, regardless of whether disputes could be settled beforehand, now proposed that this emergency government include parties that did not win seats in the election and be based on a new arrangement rather than on the constitution. Pachachi called this a "genuine, effective partnership" between political groups rather than election results "which we do not think reflected the voters' will, anyway."[56]

Whether this was a genuine attempt to form a coalition government or not, if implemented, it would have given a disproportionate voice to secular parties such as Allawi's that, although favored by the United States, did not receive significant votes compared to secular- and ethnic-based parties in December.[57]

Worried that a resolution to the current impasse could divide the UIA, top Sh'ite clerics met in Najaf to discuss potential solutions that would allow the bloc to hold onto power and debated more forceful intervention by the clergy. The week prior, the son of Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, Mohammed Ridha Sistani, received a

guarantee from al-Sadr that he would not object if the UIA replaced al-Jaafari with another candidate.[58]

Even so, the meeting of the parliament was postponed as Sh'ite politicians still worked to put together a list of nominations to the top positions including prime minister. An advisor to al-Jaafari indicated that one of the leading candidates to replace him as the prime minister was Ali al-Adeeb, who was also from the al-Da'wa Party. The aide, Adnan Ali al-Kadhimi, also said that Talabani would likely remain as president and that Ayad Allawi, Adnan al-Dulaimi, and Saleh al-Mutlak were being considered for the two deputy president positions. Talabani is a Kurd, Allawi is a secular Shi'ite, and al-Dulaimi and al-Mutlak are both Sunnis.

Many leaders were now so disillusioned with the process that they predicted the negotiations to form a government would go on for weeks or months. Al-Mutlak, who acknowledged he was running for deputy president, said that he believed negotiations would wear on for weeks. He called al-Adeeb, the possible candidate for prime minister "an Iranian," and said that regardless of what candidates the UIA put forward, "all of them are the same."[59] Similarly, Zafir al-Ani, a spokesman for the Iraqi Accordance Front, predicted that a government would not be formed for another month because of the differences among the parties.[60]

Al-Jaafari sent mixed messages as to whether he would voluntarily step down or allow himself to be replaced by consensus, but finally realized he had to step down. On April 19, he announced in a nationally televised news conference that stepping down would be "out of the question."[61] In a complete reversal, the very next day he signaled that he would allow leaders of the UIA to withdraw his nomination. On April 21 the Shi'ite coalition announced that it was nominating Nouri al-Maliki for the position.

Selecting an "Unknown": al-Maliki Becomes Prime Minister

In the end result, a prime minister was chosen who was a virtual unknown and who had played only a limited role within his own party and came to office only because of al-Sadr's support. Nouri al-Maliki had been elected to the National Assembly as a member of the Da'wa Party in the December 15, 2005, elections. Iraqi born and educated, he had fled to Syria in the 1980s with much of the Da'wa. After the U.S. invasion in 2003, he served as a spokesman for Da'wa and as key adviser to Interim Prime Minister Jaafari, but remained largely an unknown internationally and had little experience in governing, administration, security issues, and political conciliation.

The election of Maliki on April 22, 2006, as the next prime minister did, however, finally break the major impasse in forming a new government. The United States and others hoped that, because he was not as closely associated with al-Sadr as al-Jaafari was, he would have a freer hand in reigning in the militias and in creating ethnically and sectarian-balanced military and police forces with a national spirit.

Al-Maliki also began by taking a positive public stance. In late April 2006, al-Maliki pledged that his government would begin the process of funneling the militias

into Iraq's security forces. This was reinforced by a statement by the usually reticent Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani in which he declared, "Weapons must be in the hands of government security forces that should not be tied to political parties but to the nation."[62] He added further that Iraqi security forces must be formed "on sound, patriotic bases so that their allegiance shall be to the homeland alone, not to any other political or other groups."[63]

In Maliki's first meeting with al-Sadr as Iraq's new prime minister, he broached the issue of disbanding the militias gently saying, "Merging the militias into the military is not to disrespect them but to reward them for their role in the struggle against dictatorship." He also said it was a "solution to the problem of having weapons outside the government."[64] Yet during a news conference after the meeting, the young cleric did not address the issue of disbanding the Mahdi Army, but rather focused his comments on a Rice-Rumsfeld visit to the region and the presence of U.S. troops.[65]

Early on in his tenure, al-Maliki also warned Iraq's neighbors that while it was appreciative of their efforts to shelter anti-Saddam factions throughout the duration of his regime, Iraq would not tolerate "security interference," or foreign involvement in "certain movements inside Iraq."[66]

Behind the scenes, al-Maliki made slow progress in forming a new Iraqi cabinet and government. In mid-May it was reported by Sheikh Khaled al-Attieh, the Shi'ite deputy speaker of the parliament, that the Defense Ministry would be given to a Sunni from Ayad Allawi's secular list. He also stated that the Shi'ites would remain in control of the Interior Ministry, a contentious post as it controlled many of the internal security forces said to be infiltrated by Shi'ite militias and death squads. The Kurdish Alliance would head the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Housing and Construction, Water and Irrigation, Industry, and Human Rights. Al-Attieh also implied that the leader of the Oil Ministry was all but decided upon: Hussein Shahristani, a well-respected and impartial Shi'ite nuclear scientist would control the post.[67]

Yet despite promises by those close to Prime Minister al-Maliki that the government would be formed quickly, delays continued, as did more assertions that an official announcement of the cabinet was at hand. As the constitutionally mandated deadline of Monday, May 22, 2006, approached, U.S. and Iraqi officials reported that the cabinet would be announced ahead of the deadline. One Sunni politician, Dhafir al-Ani, said on May 18 that the decision would be made within 48 hours. Spokesmen for al-Maliki similarly asserted that the process was almost complete and that of those who take up new positions in the cabinet, four would be women.[68]

During these ongoing political negotiations, sectarian violence continued to threaten to precipitate full-scale civil war. Iraqi Health and Interior Ministries statistics indicated that 686 civilians were killed in April in addition to 190 insurgents, 54 policemen, and 22 Iraqi soldiers.[69] For the same month, the Baghdad morgue reported that it had received 1,091 bodies.[70] In reality, the death toll was probably higher.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani acknowledged this in an emotional call for peace: "If we add to that the number of bodies which are not found, or similar crimes in other provinces, then the total number calls for deep concern and rage." He continued, "Behind every so-called unidentified body there is traumatized mother, an orphan child, a devastated father and an unfortunate wife. Each drop of blood spilt is watering the fields of evil and is growing the seeds of division."[71] He similarly called for unanimous and unequivocal condemnation of the acts by all of Iraq's political parties and clerical leaders.[72]

SECTARIAN CLEANSING AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

The rise of sectarian violence in Iraq varied by location. In some mixed Shi'ite-Sunni communities it had a unifying effect. In these instances Shi'ites and Sunnis organized armed patrols to protect their neighborhoods from sectarian violence.[73] At the same time, however, sectarian displacement became steadily more serious in most mixed areas, as Sunni and Shi'ite families left their mixed neighborhoods for areas where their sect was the majority. The UN-affiliated International Organization for Migration estimated that by the end of March as many as 25,000 Iraqis had been displaced since the February 22 Askariya bombing.

The Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration put the number even higher at 32,000.[74] Although such estimates differ, it was estimated that of these families, between 220 and 761 were Shi'ites who had fled from the Sunni-dominated al-Anbar Province to Baghdad. In turn, 50 Sunni families had reportedly relocated from Baghdad to Fallujah. It was also believed that 1,250 Shi'ite families fled Baghdad and central Iraq and settled in Najaf.[75] By mid-April, the Ministry of Displacement and Migration put the number of displaced at 60,000 people.[76] A spokesman for the ministry estimated that every day roughly 1,000 Iraqis were being forced to flee their homes.[77] Much of this displacement occurred in and around the capital, traditionally a mixed city.

Some sources reported that the number of displaced Iraqis tripled from 23,000 to almost 70,000 people between March 22 and April 15. By April 19, the total number of Iraqis displaced by sectarian violence was estimated to be 80,000 by the President of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, Said Hakki. This included over 7,000 Shi'ite families and about 2,800 Sunni families.[78] This total steadily climbed and by mid-May, Iraqi immigration officials said that between 90,000 and 100,000 individuals had been displaced, or 15,000 families.[79]

In the Shi'ite city of Najaf, an abandoned hotel was turned into a shelter for incoming families, and in Nasiriyah, arriving families began setting up tents on the outskirts of the city.[80] Similarly, an amusement park in the predominately Shi'ite town of al-Kut was converted into a makeshift refugee camp.[81] Iraqi officials worried that this massive relocation would cause food and water shortages.[82] In April, there were reports that with dysentery spreading, conditions were expected to worsen with the coming summer.[83]

Hakki said that camps had been established in 14 provinces, with the majority of refugees flooding to those in Samarra, Fallujah, Basra, Najaf, and neighborhoods within Baghdad. The Red Crescent, the prime minister's office, and the Ministries of Health, Migration and Displacement, Interior, and Defense were working to alleviate health concerns associated with the displacement and provide clean water, latrines, food, and bedding.[84] In addition to the fear of disease, Hakki worried that these secularly segregated refugee camps would become easy targets for terrorists seeking mass-casualty attacks.[85]

Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) spokesman Lt. Col. Barry Johnson said that U.S. officials were aware of the problem and were working to address it with the Iraqi government. "The key issue," Lt. Col. Johnson continued, "is to continue to develop the Iraqi security forces and peoples' confidence in their ability."[86]

This growing pace of internal displacement was the result of direct threats by either Sunni insurgents or Shi'ite militias and the general deterioration of security and increase in sectarian tensions following the attack on the Askariya shrine. Families who had previously felt secure among their long-time neighbors of an opposite sect now faced abductions and killings perpetrated in broad daylight by masked gunmen. For example, when carloads of gunmen grabbed Mohannad al-Azawi, a Sunni, from his pet store in Baghdad and a Shi'ite friend attempted to intervene, witnesses said the men pointed a pistol to his head and asked, "You want us to blow your brains out too?"[87]

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq detailed these occurrences in a report issued in April noting that "a number of Sunni and Shi'a families living in mixed neighborhoods were forcibly evicted from their homes or left voluntarily because of threats of violence from militias, insurgents and other armed groups."[88]

It was unclear how methodical most sectarian evictions were. They were perpetrated by a combination of gangs, insurgents, and militias and targeted both Sunnis and Shi'ites; it seems unlikely that a concerted effort by a single or even a few organizations was at work. However, Hakki noted that in most cases, threats came from groups based outside of the neighborhoods. "They are highly organized," he said, "It is not happening in a haphazard way."[89]

According to a memo attributed to al-Qa'ida in May 2006, it appeared that the displacement of Shi'ites was a new element of the terrorist organization's strategy in Iraq. The memo, found in an al-Qa'ida "hideout" in Yousifiya by U.S. forces, called on followers to "displace the Shi'ites and displace their shops and businesses from our areas."[90]

In the mixed al-Amel district in Baghdad, some Sunni families received envelopes containing a single bullet and a letter telling them to leave the neighborhood immediately.[91] A Sunni shop owner, Dhafir Sadoun, left his long-time residence in Sh'ite Sadr City saying, "We did not fear the Mahdi Army because we've lived in Sadr City for 20 years, and everyone knows us and knows how we love the Shi'ites. But the Interior Ministry commandos arrest any Sunni. They don't just arrest them; they kill them."[92] The displacement caused by this sectarian violence was also being exploited for financial gain in some instances. There were reports that an estate agent

in Adamiyah, a Sunni suburb in Baghdad, had paid teenagers to distribute fliers to Shi'ite households warning them to leave with the intention of buying up the property at low prices.[93]

Similar tactics were employed in other areas. Leaflets were frequently distributed by gunmen or even by children. In some instances, those who had fled did so after hearing their names on a list of "enemies" read out at mosques. It was also reported that "religious vigilantes" would paint black crosses, referred to as "the mark of death," on the doors of those they sought to drive out. Young children were sometimes abducted for several hours and then returned to their families with a warning that if they did not leave, the next time their children would be killed.[94]

Displacement also drove Iraqis outside Iraq's borders as the number of Iraqi refugees to surrounding countries increased. In 2004, 258 Iraqis registered as refugees with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Egypt. Between 2005 and March 2006, that number increased to 828. Although Iraqi embassies in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan confirmed that there had been an increase in Iraqi refugees to those countries, they did not have exact numbers. In addition, although the UNHCR numbers are not in and of themselves alarming, they nearly doubled in a little over a year. It is safe to say as well that most Iraqi refugees did not bother registering with the UN.[95]

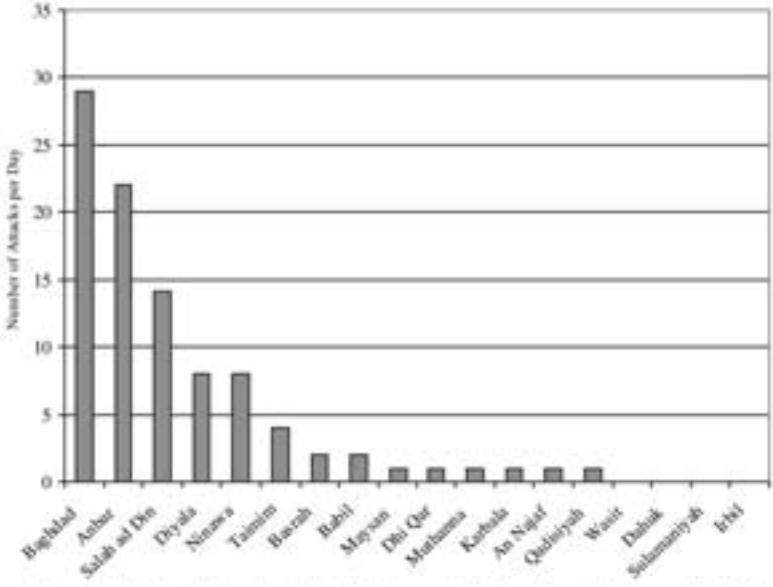
Observers increasingly worried that the constant level of violence and its damaging effects on reconstruction and the rehabilitation of the economy would force out many of Iraq's "best and brightest," making the recovery from this cycle all the more difficult. For example, Ban Istafan, a women biologist and teacher, fled with her Christian family to Amman after receiving a threatening letter.

In June, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants published a study that indicated 644,500 Iraqis had fled to Syria and Jordan since the beginning of the war and that 889,000 had fled Iraq in general. From July 2004 to the end of 2005, the Iraqi government issued 2 million passports. The group estimated that in total, about 2.5 percent of Iraq's population had moved abroad.[96]

ATTACK AND CASUALTY PATTERNS

Reporting by the Department of Defense (DoD) and MNF-I showed that the patterns and tactics in insurgent violence were largely cyclical during the first half of 2006.[97]

- Figure 8.1, which shows attacks by province, gives a much more balanced picture of insurgent attacks although the failure to provide casualty estimates and any chronology of attacks with major political impact makes the reporting inadequate. It is worth noting, however, that the data in this figure include only insurgency incidents as defined by MNF-I. It does not seem to include many, if not most, low-level cases of sectarian and ethnic violence and does not include incidents where crime may be a cause. Therefore it is possible that many of the day-to-day incidents that took place in the aftermath of February 22 are not reflected in the graph.



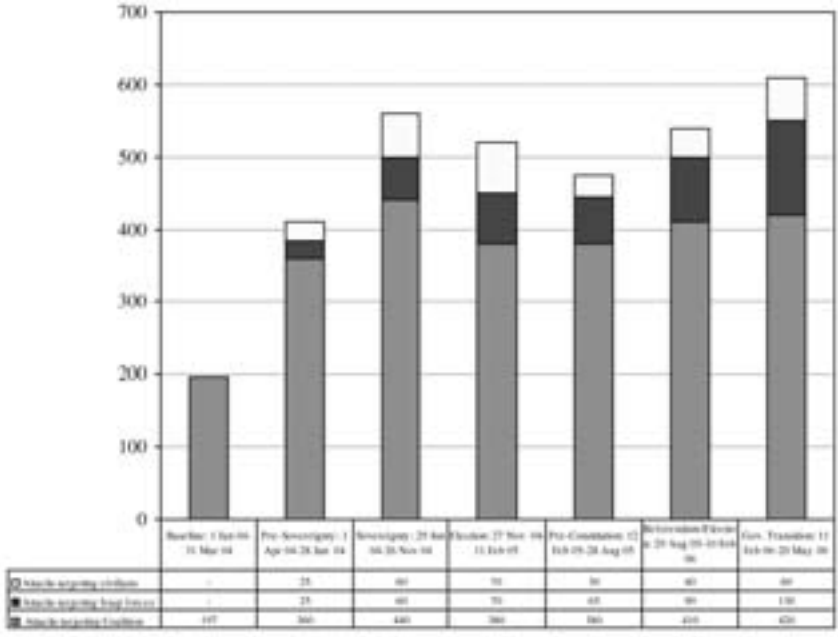
Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 34.
Note: Actual numbers were estimates derived from data presented in the above report.

Figure 8.1 Total Attacks by Province: February 11, 2006–May 12, 2006

The first four provinces—Baghdad, Anbar, Salah ad Din, and Diyala—accounted for 81 percent of all attacks during this period. Baghdad, the "epicenter" of this violence, absorbed 32 percent of all attacks. Twelve provinces, which held 50 percent of the Iraqi population, experienced 6 percent of all attacks and ten provinces suffered one or fewer incidents per day.[98]

In March, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch stated that 75 percent of all attacks took place in three provinces. He added that the other 15 provinces averaged less than six attacks per day and that 12 of those averaged less than two per day. Nationwide, however, attacks were averaging 75 per day, a level that had been consistent since August 2005.[99] In April 2006, he stated that in al-Anbar Province in particular, attacks had decreased from an average of 27 per day in October 2005 to about 18 a day.[100] Despite an increase in trained Iraqi police and military forces, the number of overall attacks had not declined in the three years since the beginning of the war.[101]

- Figure 8.2 shows average weekly attacks through May 20, 2006. Average weekly attacks for this period were higher than any previous period. The report speculated that this might be due to insurgents' attempts to derail Iraqi political efforts by exploiting a vulnerable period in the political process, and the increase of sectarian violence following the February Askariya bombing. It must be noted, however, that only the attacks reported to MNF-I are included in the report and it does not include "criminal activity."[102]
- Figure 8.3 shows the number of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) intercepted and diffused through May 2006. According to the Joint Improvised Explosive Device



Source: Material adapted from "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, March 2007, pp. 19, available at: www.defenselink.mil.

*Note: Data points are estimates from above-mentioned report report.

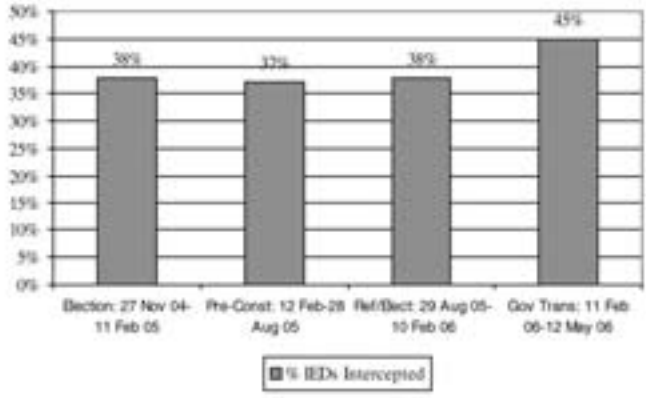
Figure 8.2 Average Weekly Attacks: April 1, 2004–May 20, 2006

Defeat Organization established by the DoD, from April 2004 to April 2006 there was a 45-percent decrease in the rate of IED casualties.[103]

- Figure 8.4 shows the number of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices intercepted.

The counts in these figures are useful largely as a way of looking at deliberate acts of violence that can clearly be attributed to Sunni insurgents. The problem with all of these metrics was they counted only major insurgent attacks and casualties. They made no attempt to analyze the rise of civil conflict or the far broader patterns of other forms of violence. For example, the Coalition's focus on insurgent attacks on its own forces led it to report that 68 percent of all attacks counted in the May report were targeted at the Coalition. Yet there were fewer casualties in these instances than attacks on "softer" Iraqi targets because U.S. troops were well protected and attacks often were "standoffish" in nature.[104] However, the average number of attacks per week rose 13 percent during this period compared with the "Referendum/Election" period before it. The DoD report noted that this was likely due to the increase in sectarian violence following the February mosque bombing.[105]

This attack trend analysis suffered badly from the fact that there is no definition of what is counted as an "attack," and there is no breakout of the means of the attack

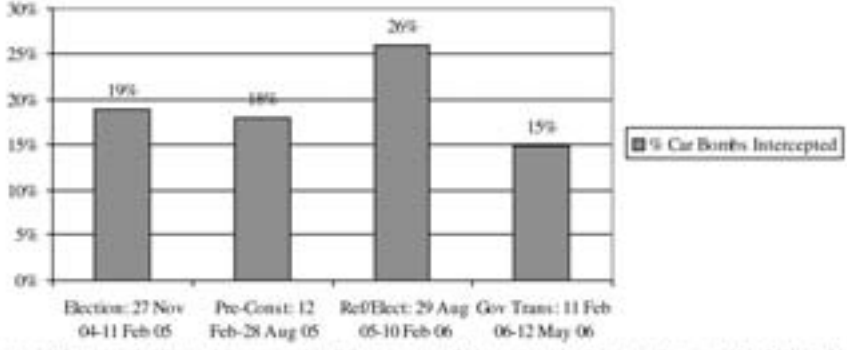


Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 36, www.defenselink.mil.

Figure 8.3 Percent of All IEDs Intercepted/Defused

and probable target. The average weekly attack data do indicate a steady deterioration since the earlier election in February 2005 from an average of 470 before late August, 550 afterward, and 620 after February 11, 2006. This is a rise of nearly a third in a year, but again, the figures seem to define "attack" only as actions that can clearly be assigned to the insurgents, ignore sectarian and ethnic violence, and ignore disappearances, kidnappings, actions by "death squads," etc. This concentration on insurgency while underplaying civil violence and the risk of civil conflict casts serious doubt on the integrity of the reporting.

It was scarcely credible that Coalition forces were targeted in 68 percent of all attacks; this figure simply reflected the MNF-I focus on the insurgents and Coalition forces. Other reporting on Iraqi violence indicated that Iraqis had become the primary target, and sectarian and ethnic violence should be counted as well as insurgent



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 36, www.defenselink.mil.

Figure 8.4 Percent of Car Bombs Intercepted/Defused: November 2004–May 2006

action. The graph showing average weekly casualties also indicates that Iraqis had become the primary target and suffered more than five times as many losses as Coalition forces, and this ratio might rise to 10:1 if all sectarian and ethnic violence were counted.

The U.S. statistics on the distribution of attacks on targets also differed sharply with that of the Iraqi Defense Ministry. In early June, Defense Minister Abdul-Qader Mohammed Jassim stated that 80 percent of attacks by "terrorists and organized crime" targeted Iraqi civilians. Comparatively, he said that 15 percent were against ISF and only 5 percent against Coalition forces.[106]

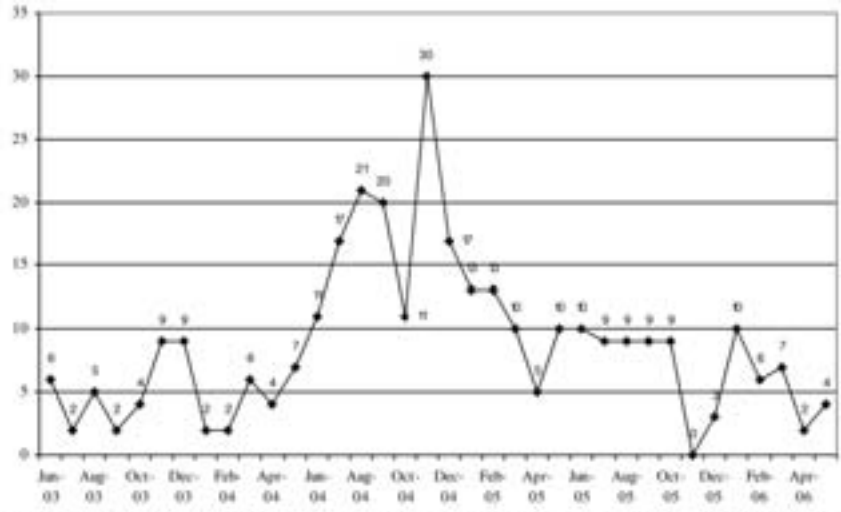
The fact that the report insists that such violence "did not remain at those high levels" immediately after the February mosque attack is a rather dubious claim and is based only on the month of April, the most recent month of reporting, when incidents declined from their peak of about 450 in March to 325 in April. This hardly makes for a downward trend.

Infrastructure Attacks

The Department of Defense reported a significant cut in attacks on infrastructure and oil facilities during February–May 2006, but also stated that past damage combined with the steady deterioration of oil field production and distribution facilities, ongoing problems in security, and corruption and theft had a major impact.

The May 2006 Quarterly Report to Congress noted that Iraqi oil production was at 1.9 million barrels per day (mbpd) during the first four months of 2006, short of the 2.5 mbpd goal of the Iraqi Oil Ministry.[107] It said that the limited production and exports were the result of "poor weather and a lack of storage facilities in the South, and pipeline maintenance challenges and sabotage in the north." It continued that goals in this area "continued to be hampered by intimidation of workers and terrorist attacks on infrastructure. . . Poor maintenance practices, logistical bottlenecks, inadequate capital investment, increased demand and terrorist attacks on oil plants and pipelines."[108]

In general, however, attacks against infrastructure had declined since August 2005 and by May 2006 accounted for only 1 percent of all insurgent attacks. This is reflected in the data in Figure 8.5. The DoD also noted that lack of sufficient progress in energy infrastructure was "not due to insurgent attacks, but rather to such factors as inadequate maintenance and inadequate capital investments in the transmission infrastructure."[109] It also noted the differences between insurgent attacks and the general criminal activity that hampered reconstruction saying, "The relatively small number of infrastructure attacks has a disproportionate impact in part because infrastructure repair is hampered by insurgent and criminal intimidation of repair contractors and maintenance workers."[110] In March, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch indicated that attacks on infrastructure had declined 60 percent in the past three months. He attributed this to the increased presence of Iraqi security forces, then 250,000, around the country in general.[111]



Source: Adapted from material provided by "Iraqi Pipeline Watch," Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, http://www.iags.org/iraqpipelinewatch.htm; and "Brookings Iraq Index," www.brookings.edu/iraqindex.

Figure 8.5 Attacks on Iraqi Oil and Gas Pipelines, Installations, and Personnel: June 2003–May 2006

The impact of such attacks was compounded by the ability of insurgents to steal oil and fuel. Ali Allawi, Iraq's former Finance Minister, estimated that insurgents were taking some 40–50 percent of all oil-smuggling profits in the country and had infiltrated senior management positions at the major northern refinery in Baji: "It's gone beyond Nigeria levels now where it really threatens national security... The insurgents are involved at all levels." has the potential of undercutting the growth potential here."[112] An unidentified U.S. official also said, "It's clear that corruption funds the insurgency, so there you have a very real threat to the new state... Corruption really has the potential of undercutting the growth potential here."[113] The former Oil Minister, Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, had said earlier in 2005 that "oil and fuel smuggling networks have grown into a dangerous mafia threatening the lives of those in charge of fighting corruption."[114]

As a tangible example of such problems, Radhi Hamza al-Radhi, the chairman of Iraq's Commission on Public Integrity, announced in early February 2006 that Meshaan al-Juburi, a member of the new Iraqi National Assembly, had been indicted earlier in December for stealing millions of dollars from the funds that were supposed to pay Sunni tribes to protect a critical oil pipeline against attacks and was suspected of giving some of the funds to insurgents.[115]

Juburi was a Sunni who had broken with Saddam Hussein in 1989 and fled the country. He had been active in the opposition to Saddam before the invasion and had tried to take control of Mosul after Saddam's fall. He was a member of the Juburi tribe, which had members in this insurgency, and had been asked to organize 17 battalions of soldiers to protect the pipeline in 2004.

He was accused of taking much of the money that was supposed to go to these pipeline protection units and allowing insurgents to play a role in the oil protection battalions. He may have created some 200–300 phantom members of each 1,000-man battalion to take the money allotted for the pay and food for nonexistent security personnel. He also may have set up ambushes so the insurgents could seize weapons being delivered to the units.

At nearly the same time, the director of a major oil storage plant near Kirkuk was arrested with other employees and several local police officials, charged with helping to orchestrate a mortar attack on the plant on February 2, 2006.[116]

U.S. and Iraqi Casualties

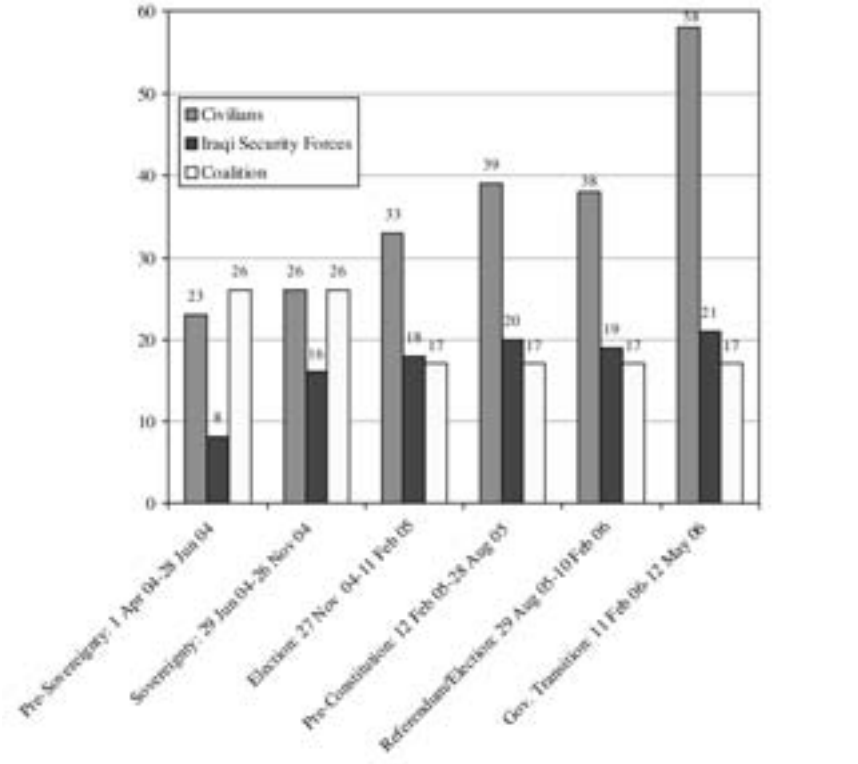
The casualty count for the United States steadily declined between October 2005 and March 2006. During this period, it dropped from 96 in October to 31 in March.[117] This downward trend was likely the result of an insurgent switch to "soft" targets, including Iraqi police and civilians, and also because parts of the country were turned over to Iraqi security forces. Indeed, by April 2006, Iraqi police, soldiers, and civilians were being killed at about a rate of 75 per day.[118] Figure 8.6 shows trends in daily Iraqi and Coalition casualties through May 20, 2006 based on an MNF-I count.

This figure does show that the number of civilians killed was rising significantly as a result of growing civil conflict. The Department of Defense report to Congress from which these data are drawn also noted the uptick in sectarian violence targeted at civilians following the Golden Mosque bombing. The percentage of attacks aimed at Iraqi civilians rose from 9 percent in January, to 10 percent in February, and 13 percent in March. In mixed cities, the percentages were often greater. For example in Baghdad 12 percent targeted civilians in February and 18 percent in March. Still, it must be noted that this only includes "attacks" as defined by the MNF-I and does not include incidents of violence categorized as "crime" or those that are not reported to the MNF-I.[119]

Figure 8.7 shows a comparison of killings reported by the Iraqi Central Morgue in 2005 and 2006. Iraq published data on civilian deaths only intermittently and these data cannot be viewed as complete. It does, however, show the increase in deaths from sectarian killings. The independent Coalition Casualty Count estimated that 33,638–37,764 Iraqis had been killed by March 2006, and 38,475–42,889 by mid-June.[120]

LOOKING AT STABILITY AND THREATS BY AREA

While most violent Sunni Arab insurgent attacks tracked by MNF-I and the U.S. government were still concentrated in four to six provinces, this count became steadily more meaningless as a measure of civil violence. It excluded ethnic violence on the edge of Kurdish-controlled areas and Shi'ite violence in key cities like Basra.



Source: Material adapted from "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Quarterly Report to Congress, Department of Defense, March 2007, pp. 19, www.defenselink.mil.

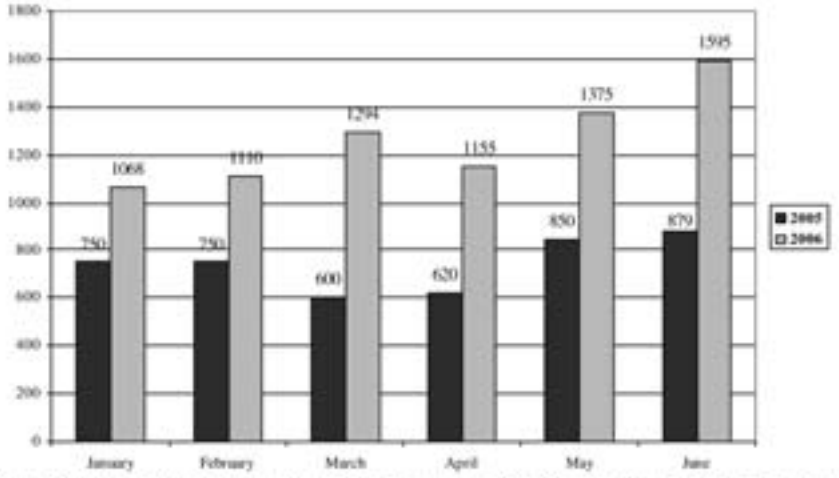
*Note: Data points are estimates from a graph provide in the DoD report.

Figure 8.6 Average Daily Casualties: April 1, 2004–May 20, 2006

No province was safe from occasional attack, and the frequency and intensity of attacks that involved actual killings or could clearly be characterized as such were only part of the story.

A different kind of MNF-I assessment issued in 2006 broke down the progress made by each province in areas of governance, security, and economics—the three focuses of the U.S. National Strategy for Victory in Iraq—and highlighted growing problems the U.S. and Iraqi governments faced in creating an independent and secure Iraqi state. This assessment gave each province a status grade of "Critical," "Serious," "Moderate," or "Stable:"[121]

- Critical: Denotes a province that has a government that is not fully functioning or not formed, or that is only be[ing] represented by a single strong leader; an economy that does not have the infrastructure or government leadership to develop and is a significant contributor to instability; and, a security situation marked by high levels of AIF activity, assassinations and extremism.



Source: Numbers extrapolated from graph in "Sabrina Tavernise and Sahar Nageeb, "Wave of Bodies in Baghdad's Central Morgue Signals A Stepped-Up Pace of Sectarian Killing." *New York Times*, July 5, 2006.

Figure 8.7 Civilian Casualties Reported by Baghdad Central Morgue: Comparison of 2005 and 2006

- Serious: Denotes a province that has a government that is not fully formed or that is not capable of serving the needs of its populace; economic development is stagnant with high unemployment; and a security situation marked by routine AIF [anti-Iraq forces] activity, assassinations and extremism.
- Moderate: Denotes a province that has a government that functions, but has areas of concern in areas such as the ability to deliver services, the influence of sectarian elements, etc; an economy that is developing slowly, but in which unemployment is still a serious concern; and the security situation is under control, but where conditions exist that could quickly lead to instability.
- Stable: Denotes a province that has a fully functioning government; a strong economic development that supports job creation; and a semi-permissive security environment where local security forces maintain the rule of law.

The resulting assessment still failed to portray the threat of civil violence, or the problems caused by local militias, but it did highlight the fact that the insurgency and security were directly linked to the success or failure of local governance and the local economy—an issue increasingly stressed by senior U.S. commanders in Iraq. It also showed that civil conflict had become a nationwide problem, closely coupled to failures in governance and economic hardship:[122]

Muthanna Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Rule of law is weak due to inadequate prison facilities. Understanding of roles within government structures needs emphasis. A very dominant Governor, but Provincial Council is able to function effectively.

- **Security:** ISF operate in a relatively permissive environment.
- **Economics:** Poorest province in Southern Iraq.

Maysan Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Governance capacity is improving with DFID assistance; however, rule of law hindered due to a lack of adequate prison facilities.
- **Security:** Large number of experienced local militia present. Camp Abu Naji experiences frequent IDF attacks and British patrols are frequently subject to harassing fire.
- **Economics:** Little capacity to jump start its economy.

Kurdish Region: Stable

- **Governance:** Stable government with close coordination between government and security forces. Rule of law established and functioning.
- **Security:** No significant AIF activity. Local security forces restraining crime and terrorism within the established legal system.
- **Economics:** Foreign investment increasing and overall level of economic development is sound.

Ninawa Province: Serious

- **Governance:** Governor is overshadowed by strong Kurdish Vice-Governor. Outdated laws hinder the performance of Provincial Council and members are unsure of their responsibility to their constituents.
- **Security:** Inter-ethnic violence and AIF activity remain high.
- **Economics:** High unemployment and poor infrastructure combine to depress economy.

Tamim Province: Serious

- **Governance:** Governor unofficially accountable to the Kurdish political parties. Provincial Council members have not fully grasped their duties and responsibilities. Deputy Governor position is unfilled due to deadlock between Arab and Turcoman blocs on the Provincial Council.
- **Security:** Inter-ethnic violence and suspicions of post-election tensions remain high.
- **Economics:** High unemployment. Requires private sector development and growth in agribusiness.

Salah ad Din Province: Serious

- **Governance:** Provincial government functioning but is weak in providing essential services.
- **Security:** Ongoing tribal conflict adds to relatively high level of tension within the province. AIF attacks against ISF remain a concern.

- **Economics:** Infrastructure unable to support economic development; Provincial Council has yet to develop a plan to address.

Diyala Province: Serious

- **Governance:** The top provincial offices are divided up between Shi'a, Sunnis and Kurds, leading to consistent infighting. Governor often makes decisions without consulting with the Council, but he is accountable to them for the decisions he makes. Rule of law requires continued emphasis.
- **Security:** Attacks of intimidation and assassinations continue nearly unabated, targeting ISF, PC and civilians.
- **Economics:** Economy continues to grow, but unemployment remains very high.

Baghdad Province: Serious

- **Governance:** Strong and growing influence of SCIRI party on the Provincial Council.
- **Security:** Assassinations and intimidation of public officials, ISF and civilians occur frequently. Criminal activity is a major contributor to the overall level of violence.
- **Economics:** High unemployment and weak infrastructure have hindered economic development. National Assembly interference in Provincial Council impedes its ability to act to improve economic growth.

Anbar Province: Critical

- **Governance:** The Governor is the dominant figure in all decision making and governance functions. Provincial Council has minimal control over Governor's actions. IPS and courts system incapable of adequately supporting the rule of law. Significant intimidation of PC members.
- **Security:** Insurgent activity against ISF increasing; security situation is negatively impacting redevelopment efforts.
- **Economics:** Infrastructure incapable of supporting small business development. Little opportunity for growth.

Babil Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Little transparency and accountability of provincial government. Governor very dominate in dealings with other members of Provincial Council. Strong Iranian influence apparent within Council. Provincial Council attempting to place party loyalist in Police Chief position.
- **Security:** Ethnic conflict in North Babil. The Provincial Council no longer claims responsibility fort his area, claiming to have ceded it to Baghdad province. Crime is a major factor within the province.
- **Economics:** Infrastructure problems are affecting the growth of the private sector; unemployment remains high.

Najaf Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Iranian influence on provincial government of concern. However, government is capable of maintaining stability within the province and providing for the needs of its populace.
- **Security:** AIF activity reduced to a level that ISF can control without CF assistance. There is growing tension between Mahdi Militia and Badr Corps that could escalate. Recent targeting of CF resulted in 5 US deaths.
- **Economics:** Growth improving, but unemployment remains a concern at above 10 percent. Tourism offers a bright prospect for future growth.

Karbala Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Government is functioning and improving. However, it appears to be increasing association with the Iranian Government. The local population is cognizant of the large presence of Iranians in Karbala and are concerned about their growing influence.
- **Security:** AIF activity reduced to a level that ISF can control without CF assistance. Suicide attacks are infrequent, but have occurred within the last 30 days, killing over 70 people in one event.
- **Economics:** Growth improving, but unemployment remains a concern at 10 percent.

Qadisiyah Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Provincial Council ineffective at providing essential services; dominant Governor meddles in all areas of government; rule of law corrupted and bureaucratic.
- **Security:** Security situation is manageable by local ISF with some support from CF.
- **Economics:** Slowly improving economic picture; unemployment is biggest concern.

Wasit Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Governor is weak and appears more interested in furthering his own and the DAVA party's interest than in improving local government's responsiveness to the people.
- **Security:** Manageable, but high level of smuggling activity and tensions between Badr Corps and JAM could lead to a worsening situation.
- **Economics:** Unemployment in the province remains high; economic development has not been addressed to the extent required.

Basrah Province: Serious

- **Governance:** Slowly getting started, the provincial government often attempts to assert its influence beyond its authority.
- **Security:** High level of militia activity including infiltration of local security forces. Smuggling and criminal activity continues unabated. Intimidation attacks and assassination are common.

- **Economics:** Unemployment in the province remains high; economic development hindered by weak government.

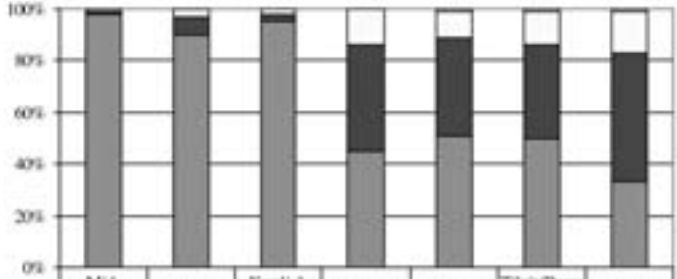
Dhi Qar Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Sound governance processes and interaction between political parties. Require strengthening of lines of communication between various entities of Provincial government.
- **Security:** Strong JAM and OMS presence, but few significant attacks. CF experience occasional harassing attacks.
- **Economics:** A number of new enterprises have started, but unemployment remains a continuing problem.

IRAQI ATTITUDES TOWARD SECURITY BY REGION, SECT, AND ETHNICITY

Public opinion was also polarized by the growing role that Shi'ite and Kurdish militias were now playing in civil violence. Sunnis generally blamed Shi'ite militias for the escalating civil war and tied them to Iraqi security forces, which they saw as increasingly ineffective. Shi'ites continued to play the above components of the Sunni insurgency for propagating the sectarian violence.

Even before the attack on the Askariya shrine on February 22, polls found major sectarian differences over how Iraqis felt about their security. According to the February 2006 Iraq status report by the Pentagon, an overwhelming number of Iraqis felt very safe in the south, Kurdish areas, and the mid-Euphrates. These results remained relatively unchanged in March and are shown in Figure 8.8.



	Mid-Euphrates	South	Kurdish Areas	Baghdad	Kirkuk	Tikrit/Baqubа	Mosul
Don't Know/No Answer	1%	3%	-	-	1%	1%	1%
Not Safe At All	-	-	2%	14%	10%	13%	16%
Not Very Safe	1%	7%	3%	41%	38%	36%	50%
Very Safe	98%	90%	95%	45%	51%	49%	33%

Source: Department of State Office of Research, March 6-12, 2005 as cited in "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 43.

Figure 8.8 Iraqi Perceptions of Safety by Area, May 2006

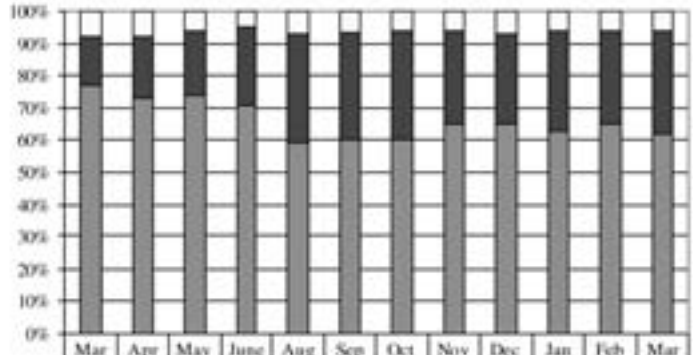
However, the May 2006 "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report found that attitudes toward security were mixed in Baghdad and Kirkuk. Only about half felt very safe and the other half felt they were not very safe or not very safe at all. While the poll did not break out the results by sect, it was clear that Sunnis felt notably less secure than Shi'ites. In the Sunni central cities such as Tikrit and Baquba, only 42 percent said they felt very safe, while 41 percent responded not very safe and 16 percent not very safe at all. In Mosul, a full 74 percent of Iraqis said they did not feel safe at all.

Fear and security problems did not necessarily reflect any popular support for sectarian and ethnic violence. From March 2005 until March 2006, Iraqi support for violent attacks on civilians continually declined and by March 2006, 97 percent of Iraqis surveyed, according to the Pentagon's status report, viewed them as unjustifiable. Additionally, 96 percent of Iraqis said that attacks against ISF were unjustified.[123] The danger of this poll, however, was that it did not break down these views by sect, ethnicity, or region and thus does not give a reliable portrayal of the true state of affairs.

While it can probably be said that the vast majority of Iraqis did not support attacks against their fellow citizens, given the continued attacks against civilians and Iraqis, some segments of the population in various locales must have supported these efforts, passively or actively. The source of the survey is obscured and is simply referred to as "Nationwide Survey" and the methods and sampling techniques used are left out of the report. General questions about violence against civilians do not produce meaningful results about more specific sectarian and ethnic fears, anger, and hatred.

Figure 8.9 shows the level of confidence the Iraqi people had in the government to improve the situation in Iraq as of March 2006. The results were still hopeful and show what more effective governance and political leadership might have accomplished. Although the results are not broken down by sect, ethnicity, or region, more than 70 percent of those polled in the provinces of Karbala, Babil, Dahuk, Arbil, Sulamaniya, Najaf, Qadisiyah, Dhi Qar, Wasit, and Basra said they had a "great deal" or "some" confidence in the government. In Baghdad and Maysan, between 60–60.99 percent polled gave the same response, but in the Sunni areas of Anbar, Ninewa, Salah ad Din, Tamim, and Diyala, fewer than 50 percent had confidence in the government.[124] Although this gives some indication of the divisions of opinion along ethnic and sectarian lines, it does not indicate to what depth Sunni confidence in the government has sunk, as it indicates less than 50 percent gave positive responses.

As the May 2006 DoD report noted, the number of Iraqis who believed "strongly" or "somewhat" that the national government was leading the country in the right direction was still 60–66 percent between August 2005 and March 2006. Those who "strongly" disagreed or "somewhat" disagreed remained at about 27 percent over the eight-month period. Those who did not know or did not answer stayed at about 10 percent.[125] The breakdown by province was exactly the same as the survey displaying Iraqis' confidence in their government.



	Mar	Apr	May	June	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Don't Know/No Answer	8%	8%	6%	5%	7%	7%	6%	6%	7%	6%	6%	6%
None/Not Very Much	15%	19%	20%	24%	34%	34%	34%	29%	28%	31%	29%	32%
A Great Deal/Some	77%	73%	74%	71%	60%	62%	60%	65%	65%	63%	65%	62%

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 10.

Figure 8.9 Iraqi Confidence in Government to Improve the Situation: March 2005–March 2006

This polling result, however, did not fit the security profiles of Iraqi officials and officers and other reporting on the rising levels of violence. It also ignored that in Shi'ite and Kurdish areas the high perceptions of security were not necessarily the result of efforts by the Iraqi government or the presence of police forces. It may be a combination of security provided by both militia forces and police forces that were dominated by one sect or ethnicity.

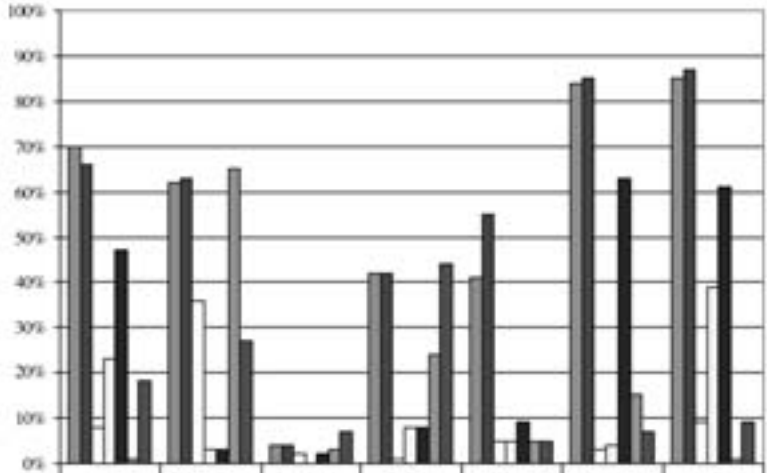
It appears that critical areas such as Anbar were ignored. For example, Kirkuk emerges as a deeply insecure area, and Mosul as an extremely high-risk area, in Figure 8.8. These results illustrate in detail why polls that report nationwide results for all Iraqis can be meaningless relative to polls that report by area of Iraq and which poll Iraqis in ways that directly or indirectly reflect their sectarian and ethnic identity.

Many of these same polling problems are evident in Figure 8.10, which shows the percentage of Iraqis who expressed confidence in various armed factions in Iraq, including militias and the government, to improve the situation in Iraq. Again, there is no mention of Anbar Province. When broken down by region, the disparities in Iraqi opinions become clearer.

Moreover, according to data in the May 2006 update of "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," an overwhelming majority of Iraqis regardless of province believed that militias made Iraq more dangerous and should be abolished. These data are shown in Figure 8.11.

Iraqi Opinion on Other Areas of Life

The data in the May 2006 report to Congress on the status of Iraq's stability and security indicated that Iraqis in all provinces believed that the economic situation



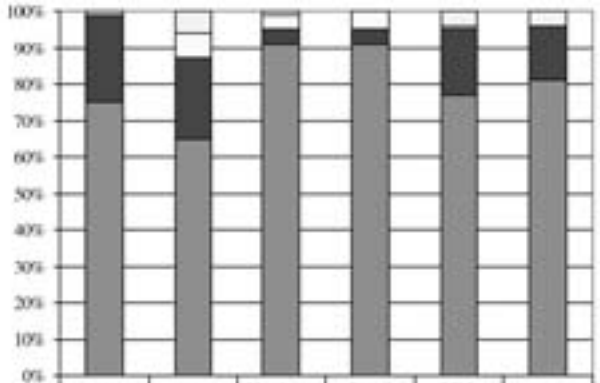
	Baghdad	Kurdish Areas	Mosul	Kirkuk	Tikrit/Baquba	Mid-Euphrates	South
Iraqi Army	70%	62%	4%	42%	41%	84%	85%
Iraqi Police	66%	63%	4%	42%	55%	85%	87%
MNF-I	8%	36%	2%	1%	5%	3%	9%
Badr Org	23%	3%	-	8%	5%	4%	39%
Mahdi Army	47%	3%	2%	8%	9%	63%	61%
Peshmerga	1%	65%	3%	24%	5%	15%	1%
Armed Resistance	18%	27%	7%	44%	5%	7%	9%

Source: Department of State Office of Research, Nationwide Survey, April 13-21, 2006, as cited in "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 44.
Note: In Mosul, there was no recorded data for the category of "Badr Org."

Figure 8.10 Who Can Improve the Situation in Iraq?

had worsened between March 2005 and March 2006.[126] Those who thought the economic situation was better than before the war was cut in half in Baghdad, from about 60 percent to 30 percent. Even in the Shi'ite south, by May 2006 only 70 percent of respondents believed that Iraq was better off economically after the war than before. In Sunni areas, the numbers were much lower. These data are shown in Figure 8.12.

This report was flawed in several respects. The report dodged around critical problems with unemployment by quoting vague national figures and stating that other estimates ranged between 25 and 40 percent[127] (the Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] said 20–30 percent and the Energy Information Administration said 27–40 percent). Saying that unemployment and poverty "remain concerns" but that there are "substantial difficulties in measuring them accurately," glosses over one of the most destabilizing aspects of modern Iraq. It ignored the impact on young men in high crime and insurgency areas. It ignored the failure of the aid program to create real jobs, with peak employment around 120,000 in a country with a work force the CIA estimated at 7.4 million. Unemployment was not a casual



	Baghdad	Kurdistan	Northern Arab	Sunni Provinces	Mid-Euphrates	South
Unknown	1%	6%	1%	-	4%	4%
Don't Know	-	7%	4%	5%	1%	-
"Safer/Should Be Strengthened"	24%	22%	4%	4%	18%	15%
"Dangerous/Should Be Abolished"	75%	65%	91%	91%	77%	81%

Source: International Republican Institute, March 23-31, 2006 as cited in "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 30.

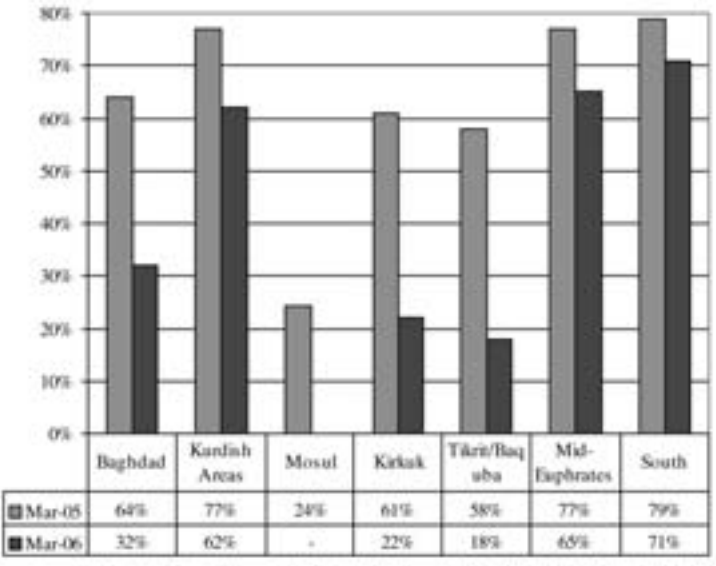
Figure 8.11 Iraqi Views of Militias

macroeconomic factoid; it was a central key to bringing stability, security, and defeating the insurgency.

These issues raise typical questions about the accuracy of many polls the U.S. government conducted in Iraq. Once again, there was no explanation or validation of the poll. It is extremely difficult to see, however, that the results for the percent of Iraqis who felt the economy was better than before the war could possibly be right if the gross domestic product data were right or the unemployment data were right. If the poll results are right, however, the text should mention the massive decline in economic confidence between March 2005 and March 2006 in Baghdad, the Kurdish areas, Kirkuk, and Tikrit/Baquba.[128]

CHANGES IN THE NATURE OF THE SUNNI INSURGENCY

It became even more difficult after the Askariya shrine bombing to distinguish attacks by organized Sunni insurgents from reprisal attacks by Shi'ite militias and criminal activity. The Coalition did, however, experience some significant success in capturing al-Qa'ida members. The role of the Ba'athists in the fighting continued to decline as sectarian tensions rose. Most of the more "nationalist" insurgent groups did not condone sectarian attacks and did not seek to push Shi'ites closer to civil war.



	Baghdad	Kurdish Areas	Mosul	Kirkuk	Tikrit/Baquba	Mid-Euphrates	South
Mar-05	64%	77%	24%	61%	58%	77%	79%
Mar-06	32%	62%	-	22%	18%	65%	71%

Source: Department of State Office of Research, Nationwide Survey, March 6-12, 2006 as cited in "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 22.

Figure 8.12 Economics: Is Iraq Better Off Now Than Before the War?

The Diminishing Role of the "Ba'athists"

Sunni Islamist insurgents now got virtually all the publicity, drove almost all of the visible fighting, and dominated propaganda efforts. There was far less reporting on Ba'athist elements of the insurgency. As the trend toward civil war quickened in 2006, it was unclear how serious a role the Ba'athists played in the violence. There was some evidence that Sunnis relied on former regime elements for protection against Shi'ite militias, but the main components of the Ba'athist insurgency were based in majority Sunni areas and did not claim responsibility for sectarian attacks. They did, however, clearly continue to oppose the occupation and the Shi'ite-led Iraqi government and sought to return to power.

The Department of Defense reported the following in its May 26, 2006, report to Congress:

> Saddam loyalists are no longer considered a significant threat to the MNF-I end state and the Iraqi government. However, former regime members remain an important element involved in sustaining and enabling the violence in Iraq, using their former internal and external networks and military and intelligence expertise involving weapons and tactics. Saddamists are no longer relevant as a cohesive threat, having mostly splintered into Rejectionists or terrorist and foreign fighters.[129]

The Coalition and the Iraqi government did have continued successes in capturing former Ba'ath leaders turned insurgents as well as in dealing with the Islamists. For

example, the former aide to the Chief of Staff of Intelligence for the Saddam regime, Muhammed Hila Hammad Ubaydi (Abu Ayman), was apprehended by Iraqi forces in March 2006. Abu Ayman was suspected of having ties to al-Zarqawi and has been accused of numerous kidnappings and IED attacks. Information on his whereabouts and network was obtained from his lieutenant, Abu Qatada, a Syrian captured by Coalition forces in December 2005.[130]

The Search for Power and Tensions Between Sunni "Nationalists" and Sunni "Islamic Extremists"

At a different level, there were also growing tensions among various Sunni groups, both between Islamist extremists and nationalists and within the insurgent groups. In March 2006 a group known as the Anbar Revenge Brigade posted an Internet statement claiming that it killed five top members of al-Qa'ida during a campaign to drive them out of Ramadi. Of these fighters, four were said to be al-Qa'ida and the fifth a member of Ansar al-Sunna.[131]

Another group, the Anbar Revolutionaries, stated in March to have killed 20 foreign fighters and 33 of their Iraqi sympathizers. This group, which operated in Anbar Province, was composed of nearly 100 fighters, all of who had family members killed by al-Zarqawi's al-Qa'ida.[132]

The May 2006 "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report highlighted some of the tensions between al-Qa'ida and other Sunni Arab insurgents:

> The current positive effects of intolerance for al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) among Sunni Arabs may be limited if Sunnis perceive a lack of progress in reconciliation and government participation of increased sectarian violence draws various Sunni insurgency elements closer. Local Sunni Arab groups opposed to AQI lack the organization, money, training, and popular support to counter AQI activity...
>
> ...Operations by al-Qa'ida in Iraq and associated terrorist groups are facilitated by passive or coerced support from the Sunni population and Sunni Arab insurgent groups, whose activities impede anti-terrorist operations of the Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition forces. The insurgency depends on passive popular support, which, in turn, allows insurgents to coerce other opponents into silence acceptance or active assistance.[133]

Both cooperation and conflict were now common in the interactions between the various groups. Both appeared dominant at various stages of the war, but neither could be said to be a lasting trend.

The Role of Sunni Arab Militias

The growing sectarian pressure on Arab Sunnis from the Arab Shi'ites and the Kurds helped fuel the insurgency, but it also led some Sunnis willing to cooperate with the Coalition and the new Iraqi government to develop their own militia forces. These efforts were stimulated by the rising tensions between those Sunnis who did

not want to participate in the insurgency and the insurgents, and between the more moderate and nationalist insurgents and the more extreme Islamist movements.

Most of the Sunni militia forces that emerged by early 2006 were local and informal, operating at the tribal and neighborhood levels. In some cases, the end result was a force that was not loyal to either the insurgency or supportive of the Coalition and new Iraqi government. Some forces were part of the insurgency, and others were formed to deal with the threat posed by the more extreme Sunni Arab insurgents, such as the Zarqawi movement. Figure 8.13 shows the tribal and subtribal divisions in Iraq.

The Positive Side of the Sunni Militias

In some cases, the Coalition and the new Iraqi government helped create such militias or supported them. In the border area and part of western Iraq, for example, MNF-I and the Iraqi government found it was cheaper and more effective to buy the loyalty of local tribal militias than fight the insurgents—particularly in those areas where outside insurgents had alienated the local residents. These developments led U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch to go so far as to say that "the local insurgents have become part of the solution and not part of the problem."[134]

The Iraqi Minister of Defense, Saadoun Dulaymi, encouraged these developments, and MNF-I provided funds, weapons, and some training. U.S. officers and Ambassador Khalilzad met with key leaders. In some Sunni urban areas and towns, police forces were created that came close to being local militias, at least in terms of their recruiting base. In other areas, Sunnis were organized at the tribal or local level in an effort to protect key facilities and projects, like oil pipelines. These efforts were given further incentive when a bombing by al-Zarqawi forces killed some 70 Arab Sunnis at a recruiting station in Ramadi in January 2006.[135]

Mithal Alusi, a Sunni Arab parliamentarian, was quoted as saying, "There is a change. . .After these attacks, and after the elections, we find the people are eager to be rid of the terrorists."[136] Sheikh Osama al-Jadaan, of the Karabila tribe in Anbar Province was quoted as saying, "They claim to be striking at the US occupation, but the reality is they are killing innocent Iraqis in the markets, in mosques, in churches, and in our schools," although he also noted, "We are caught in the middle between the terrorists coming to destroy us with their suicide belts, their TNT, and their car bombs, and the American Army that destroys our homes, takes our weapons, and doesn't allow us to defend ourselves against the terrorists."[137]

These efforts continued in February.[138] Iraqi and U.S. officials issued offers and discussed deals for prisoner release, additional aid, and senior positions in the army and police for the support of Sunni "nationalist insurgents." These efforts included a meeting attended by General George W. Casey, Jr., Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and high-ranking members of Iraq's security and intelligence agencies with some of Iraq's largest Sunni Muslim Arab tribes.

Mowaffak Rubaie, the Iraqi government's National Security Advisor, said that al-Jaafari promised to recruit more Sunni Arabs into the army and police forces and

Iraq: Tribes and Subtribes*
Governorate boundary
Turkey
Syria
Iran
Saudi Arabia
Kuwait
Dahuk
Sinjar
Arbil
As Sulaymaniyah
At Ta' mim
Shammar
al-Jibur
al-Duri
Baghdad
al-Dulaym
al-Zubayd
al-Ghalal
al-Hassan
Upizah
al-Dufir
al-Mutayrat
al-Muntafiq
Most Iraqis see loyalty more in terms of their own tribal and clan ties than in any political entity.
The power of tribal shaykhs, based in part on their control of tribal landholding, was weakened by the 1958 revolution and subsequent land reform. Greater government centralization has also undermined the economic base of the tribal system.
Saddam has worked to absorb tribal influence into his regime. Saddam initially tried to incorporate tribal culture within a new Iraqi identity that focused on the Ba'th Party. He also mobilized his own clan and family networks into Iraq's military and security services. Later, to address an unstable domestic security situation after the Gulf war, Saddam resurrected and co-opted tribal rule by giving rewards to and consulting with tribal leaders to ensure their support.

Figure 8.13 Tribes and Subtribes of Iraq

to send more economic aid to Al Anbar. Rubaie and Sunni tribal leaders at the meeting also said that al-Jaafari pledged to release at least 140 prisoners in coming weeks, and that more releases would be forthcoming.

It is far from clear what official agreement, if any, was reached between local and tribal leaders in Anbar Province and Iraqi and U.S. officials regarding the

recruitment of Sunni members into the army and police in return for their cooperation against Islamists. In May a small protest broke out during a graduation ceremony of nearly 1,000 new Iraqi Army soldiers, most of them Sunnis from Anbar. After learning that day that they would be assigned outside of their hometowns such as Ramadi, dozens of the newly sworn-in soldiers tore off their uniforms, throwing them on the ground and yelling and shaking their fists toward the camera.[139]

While this was hardly more than a small disturbance and was more for show than anything else, the decision by Iraqi military leaders to deploy the troops outside their province demonstrated that the U.S. and Iraqi military officials were still hesitant to station an almost all Sunni battalion in its native province for fear it would join forces with local insurgents. Still, Iraqi Brig. Salah Khalil al-Ani, a mediator, indicated that the soldiers were under the impression they would be assigned to the Anbar region because of an alleged agreement between tribal and religious leaders of the Sunni province and Defense Ministry officers.[140]

In any case, one recruit explained the reasons behind why it was important for the soldiers to serve in their home towns and provinces as follows: "We had volunteered to serve our cities and communities, particularly our families in Ramadi and Fallujah, who have been mistreated by the present soldiers of the Iraqi army, who come in large part from Shiite areas." Another recruit had a less altruistic, but no less rational, logic behind his decision: "We are afraid of the Shiite death squads which are found inside the Iraqi army, and who might kill us if we serve outside our province."[141]

The meetings also showed that some tribal leaders wanted to create their own militias to police their cities—a move opposed by the central government. For example, Sheikh Osama al-Jadaan said his Al Anbar community had already formed an armed group, similar to the Shi'ite militias, to fight insurgents. "We started our operations three weeks ago, and they have been fruitful," he said. "We caught one of Zarqawi's assistants, and after an investigation of him . . . we handed him over to the Iraqi army and joint intelligence."

In Jubba, an area in the Sunni-dominated western Iraq near the Syrian border, Col. Shaaban Barzan al-Ubaidi, led the nascent police force. His fiery determination to "wage jihad" against the "criminal, terrorist, Saddamist, [and] Zarqawist," factions made him a U.S. ally. Al-Ubaidi, who claimed to have the support of 41 local sheikhs, said that he took up the job after more than 42 of his relatives were killed after trying to join the Iraqi Army and police. Unlike others in his position who disliked both the insurgents and the Coalition, al-Ubaidi praised U.S. efforts.[142]

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad explained, "We are engaged with leaders, including tribal leaders and others, to encourage them to suspend their military operations with the aim of ending the insurgency and working together with us against the terrorists . . . I think it is critical that the security ministries be given to people who are broadly accepted across sectarian and ethnic lines and that they are not people who are sectarian or divisive and that they are not people with ties to militias or armed groups."

The Negative Side of the Sunni Militias

Other Sunni voices gave a different message. Sheikh Abdel Salaam al-Qubaysi, a leader of the Muslim Scholars Association, a hard-line Sunni group with much of its base in Anbar, stated, "These are just a few sheikhs who want to get political power by claiming to be fighting the terrorists, and to be speaking for the resistance . . . They are slaves in the pockets of the occupation. They have no weight in the streets." He also blamed the attacks in Anbar on foreign Shi'ites: "We know that 40,000 militants from Iran have come to Iraq," he says. "I don't rule out that they did this to prevent Sunni Arabs from joining the Iraqi Army."[143]

Some groups became involved in the equivalent of an auction between the Coalition and the new Iraqi government and the insurgents. Some took the money and continued to support the insurgency. In a number of areas, however, the results were positive. Success varied by individual case.

Hazem al-Naimi, a political science professor at Baghdad's Mustansiriya University, was quoted as saying,

> Tribal leaders and political figures found that al Qa'ida's program is harming the political efforts and progress the Sunni political leaders are making, because al Qa'ida rejects all politics . . . Sunnis feel that the Shi'ites have taken over the government and now it is their state . . . The Badr Brigades are in the interior ministry and under the interior ministry's name they go to towns, kill and arrest.[144]

As soft sectarian cleansing and abductions increased in mixed neighborhoods, some Sunnis began forming their own militias rather than leaving their homes. Sunni mosques served as places for meeting and organization, as well as for inspiration, for such groups. Preachers issued fatwas instructing their members to purchase guns and form a collective defense against further acts of violence by Shi'ites. Fares Mahmoud, deputy preacher of the El Koudiri mosque said, "We've made an agreement with the neighbors that if we have another attack, they'll pick up their weapons and fight the invaders."[145] He continued, "We are depending on the soul of the people to protect us."

The feeling among Sunnis, that their hand was being forced despite their best wishes, closely paralleled many of the comments made by Shi'ite leaders and militias prior to the Askariya bombing. As Ismael Zayer, editor for the Iraqi newspaper *Al Sabah Al Jadid* said, "At the end of the day, if nobody will protect them and the government won't intervene, then they have to protect themselves." Adnan Abbas Allawi, a middle-aged manager echoed these feelings, "This decision was forced on us. We don't want to do this, but it's not possible to see our mosques burned and insulted. Patience has its limits."

Although the exact events were unclear, it appeared that in April a two-day gun battle in the Azamiyah district, a Sunni neighborhood near Baghdad, was the result of a local Sunni militia attempting to repel what it thought were Shi'ite death squads. U.S. officials countered, however, that Coalition forces and the Iraqi Army were on

patrol when they received fire from insurgents. Later a joint U.S.–Iraqi checkpoint again took fire, at which point reinforcements were called in. Although the residents may have mistaken U.S. and Iraqi Army patrols for the Shi'ite-dominated police, it nonetheless demonstrated that localized Sunni militias were capable of and willing to mount a coordinated defense. Moreover, it was a testament to the increasingly polarized divisions between the security forces and the overall relationships between Iraqi Sunnis and Shi'ites.[146]

According to reports, in the early morning, mosques in the Azamiyah area began calling "Allah Akbar" and "Go for Jihad! Defeat the aggressors," signaling that the neighborhood was under attack. Residents said that the neighborhood security force that had formed in the aftermath of the February 22 Askariya bombing to protect their families and homes from Shi'ite militias took up positions on rooftops and began firing at military vehicles. Other men went house to house urging able males to join the fight. "We defended our neighborhood, our mosques and our honor," said one man who was part of the battle."[147]

Regardless of whether Shi'ite militias, security forces, or the Iraqi Army was the ones entering the town, the perception in the larger Sunni community was that it was another example of Shi'ite death squads tied to the government conducting sectarian cleansing, and their outrage was expressed accordingly.

"We have evidence that some officials and militias are up to their necks in the killings and kidnappings that take place daily in Baghdad," said Sunni politician Dhafi al-Ani.[148] Well-known Sunni politician Adnan al-Dulaimi echoed these sentiments and accused the government of waging "the ugliest form of ethnic cleansing" against the Sunni communities and blamed "the existence of unleashed militia, including some militia backed by foreign powers who have only one goal that is to see Iraqis slaughtered in a sectarian war."[149] Saleh al-Mutlaq, a possible candidate for a high-level ministerial post and the leader of the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, demanded that government police forces "stop their raiding, kidnapping and looting."[150]

The following day, al-Qa'ida in Iraq issued a statement promising "a new raid to avenge the Sunnis at Adhamiyah and the other areas, and the raid will start with the dawn of Wednesday, if God wishes. . . The Shiite areas will be an open battlefield for us."[151]

The al-Jaafari government said that terrorist groups masked as security and police forces that had moved into the area instigated the violence. Specifically, the Shi'ite-dominated government accused the Islamic Army of Iraq, the 1920 Revolution Brigades, and al-Qa'ida of intentionally trying to "destabilize the city because of its political, demographic and media importance." The statement by al-Jafaari's office continued, "They launched ugly rumors that they belong to the Interior Ministry commando force. These armed groups started to shoot at an Iraqi army camp in two assaults."[152]

With such a wide variety of accounts of the same events, it was impossible to prove or disprove the version put forth by the Iraqi government. However, in the past, the MOI and the government frequently deflected accusations of atrocities by Shi'ite

death squads by claiming that it was the work of insurgents purporting to be Iraqi security forces. However, there seemed to be scant evidence to support this claim. To the contrary, the incorporation of Shi'ite militias into the security forces, and the frequency of mystery abductions and body dumps, especially since the February bombing of the Shi'ite shrine, were all well documented.

While it was unclear if these Sunni "neighborhood watch" groups cooperated or supported the "Ba'athist," "nationalist," or "Islamist" elements of the insurgency, reporting of the events portrayed the acts by the "Adhamiya Defense Committees" as a legitimate act of self-defense rather than an insurgent attack on U.S. and Iraqi forces.

Furthermore, some Sunni Arabs sought to form their own militia at the national level to counter Shi'ite and Kurdish forces rather than for self-protection. While some of these were informal neighborhood watch groups, others had full-time members and names for their organizations. In early February, a force called the "Anbar Revolutionaries" emerged that opposed the more extreme elements of the insurgency like al-Qa'ida, but also it was created to help secure Arab Sunnis against Arab Shi'ite and Kurdish pressure and attacks. According to press reports, this force was composed largely of former Ba'ath loyalists, Saddam supporters, moderate Iraqi Sunni Islamists, and other Arab Sunni nationalists. It was organized partly to resist pressure from Arab Sunni Islamist extremists, but its main purpose was to deal with the threat from the Shi'ite Badr Brigades.

One Sunni Arab official involved was quoted as saying, "The Anbar Revolutionaries are here to stay, we need them to protect the people. . . Sunnis do not have the Shi'ite Badr [Organization] or the Kurdish Peshmerga. In these times when sectarian tension is high, such a force is needed." Another was quoted as saying, "It is our right to defend ourselves."

It was clear that Sunni participation in the government, Iraqi forces, and the role of the Sunni militia(s) was dependent on the ability of the new Iraqi government to reassure Sunnis about their day-to-day security. It was also dependent on the government's ability to compromise with Sunnis on issues like the control of oil and other revenues, the nature of central versus local power, the nature of any federation, allowing Ba'ath leaders to return to the government, the role of religion in law and governance, and the other key aspects that would shape Iraq's character as a state. However, as the civil war escalated, the likelihood of these compromises taking shape diminished considerably.

It is also clear that further purges of Sunnis from the government, military, and security services made things worse. Such mistakes were exemplified by the implementation without warning of a six-month-old order from the Iraqi de-Ba'athification Commission that led to the dismissal of 18 Iraqi generals, colonels, and majors—mostly Sunni Arabs from Anbar.[153]

The Issue of Foreign Volunteers

Syria continued to be a source of foreign volunteers for the Sunni Arab insurgency. In a March 2006 Senate hearing, Gen. John Abizaid assessed that it was Syrian

national security and concerns for its own internal stability that were causing it to tighten its borders. General Abizaid acknowledged Syrian efforts saying, "[T]he flow of foreign fighters across the Syrian border has decreased, and that's clear from our intelligence. . . we know that the Syrians have moved against the foreign fighters."[154] He continued by asserting that the Syrian reaction was one of "self-interest" and that the decrease in fighters coming across the border was because the Syrian government viewed them as posing "a threat to Syria, and they certainly don't want to have these organizations and groups operating within their own country that are ultimately going to be a threat to their own government."[155]

Syria, however, was only the easiest portal into Iraq; the foreign volunteers had come from a variety of other countries. As discussed in previous chapters, a large number of volunteers were from Saudi Arabia. These neo-Salafi insurgents were recruited for suicide-bombing missions. Volunteers also came from North Africa. For example, Morocco broke up several recruitment cells in 2006.

There were also reports of Iranian fighters in Iraq. They did not appear to actively attack Coalition forces or Iraqis, but rather played a training role for Shi'ite militias and supplied weapons. The United States arrested several Iranian intelligence officers in late 2006, and it was clear that they had been operating in Iraq for some time. The border with Iran remained porous, and British troops stationed in southern Iraq had little doubt that Iranian volunteers and weaponry entered Iraq to aid Shi'ite militias after the mosque bombing.

U.S.–IRAQI MILITARY CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THE INSURGENCY

The fight against the insurgents continued to produce tactical victories without producing significant strategic results. The Coalition launched several operations in March 2006 aimed at insurgents attempting to foster sectarian violence. Many of these were conducted with Iraqis taking the lead where possible.

In "Operation Scales of Justice," 26,000 Iraqi Army and police forces together with 10,000 Coalition forces conducted 300 patrols on the streets of Baghdad per day in an effort to increase general security. This operation included more than 100 checkpoints established throughout the city and was scheduled to continue until a new Iraqi government was formed.[156] According to Maj. Gen. James Thurman, this operation resulted in increased local trust in Iraqi forces and over 3,000 anonymous tips regarding insurgent activity. He also indicated that these ongoing operations caused a 58-percent reduction in attacks in the city in the past 90 days.[157]

The results of military operations against insurgent "strongholds" were mixed at best. Even as Iraqi forces came on-line and began taking the lead in joint operations, many of the same limits remained. While there have been success stories, insurgents were consistently able to disperse and reemerge at another location. Lack of a permanent security presence in many areas permitted the insurgents and criminals to return. Perhaps most importantly, despite the fact that these operations and raids were often operational successes—they were able to net insurgent groups and

weapons caches—the number of attacks did not abate, and it was increasingly the case in 2006 that Iraqis were the targets.

Moreover, every Coalition and ISF operation had growing sensitivity as the Sunni insurgency had ceased to be the primary threat to Iraqi unity and security. U.S. and Iraqi officials cited the sectarian violence and the risk of civil war as increasing areas of concern. U.S. military officials in particular noted the danger that Shi'ite militias posed to Iraqi security.[158] This helped to lead to talks within the Department of Defense in April 2006 to orchestrate a "second liberation of Baghdad" once a new Iraqi government was formed.[159] Operationally, it was designed to have Iraqi forces in the lead supported by U.S. airpower, Special Operations, intelligence, and backup troops. As Iraqi and U.S. forces went through each neighborhood, they would leave behind "SWEAT" (Sewage, Water, Electricity and Trash) teams to improve local conditions and facilities.

This new battle was to offer the citizens of the capital protection from sectarian violence in exchange for their assistance in identifying and capturing or killing insurgent and terrorist groups.[160] The battle was also to be an effort to show that the Iraqi government was capable of "taking back the streets."[161] The goal was to conduct the operation during the summer, once the government had settled in and then begin withdrawing U.S. troops toward the end of the year.[162]

Hunting al-Qa'ida and al-Zarqawi

Insurgents did not react by going on the defensive. In March 2006, the Ministry of Interior reported that a plot was uncovered that involved an attempt by 421 al-Qa'ida members to stage an attack on the Green Zone. These recruits were, according to Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, a "bureaucrat's signature away" from acceptance into the army battalions charged with guarding the gates to the Green Zone. After gaining access to the area, the fighters planned on storming U.S. and British embassies, taking those inside hostage. Several Defense Ministry officials were implicated as "insiders" in the plot and were subsequently jailed.[163] It is important to note, however, that Coalition sources never confirmed the existence of such a plot.

The Coalition did have significant successes. Wanted terrorist Rafid Ibrahim Fattah (aka Abu Umar al Kurdi) was killed in an early morning raid in March. Abu Umar had ties to Jaysh al Islami, Ansar al Sunnah, Taliban members in Afghanistan, extremists in Pakistan, as well as senior al-Qa'ida leaders, including Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri.[164]

In April and May, a series of Coalition operations and raids against al-Qa'ida forces killed and captured several key individuals and resulted in the seizure of numerous weapons caches. Between missions on April 16 and June 2, Task Force 145 killed or captured more than 100 members of al-Qa'ida.

Several of these successes were chronicled as follows in *Defense News:*[165]

- April 28, 2006: The "Emir of Samarra," Hamadi Tahki, was killed in Samarra.

- May 2, 2006: Ten terrorists were killed, three wearing suicide vests. One was wounded at a safe house 25 miles southwest of Balad.
- May 5, 2006: Five suspects were detained and an unknown number of terrorists were killed near Samarra.
- May 13, 2006: Three terrorists were killed, and four were destroyed in a search for an al-Qa'ida leader near Julaybah. Hideouts and weapons caches were discovered as well.
- May 13–14, 2006: Abu Ali Mustafa and 15 others were killed in a raid in Latifiyah. Eight others were detained.
- May 14, 2006: A raid on a suspected terrorist hideout in Yusifiyah killed more than 25. Eight were detained and three safe houses were identified and destroyed.
- May 17, 2006: Abu Ahad and another al-Qa'ida member were killed in a Baghdad raid.
- May 23, 2006: Ten suspected terrorists were captured in Lake Tharthar.
- May 26, 2006: In Anbar, six suspected al-Qa'ida members were captured and weapons and ammunition caches were discovered.
- May 28, 2006: In a Ramadi raid, seven suspects were detained and bomb-making materials were discovered.
- May 29, 2006: Insurgent leader Ahmed al-Dabash was captured in the Mansour district of Baghdad.
- June 2, 2006: Hasayn Ali Muazabir, a wanted al-Qa'ida terrorist, was killed near Balad.

The practical problem with such victories, however, was that they tended to have a fleeting impact in a climate where there was no effective Iraqi government leadership or effective local governance, where basic services were lacking, where Shi'ite attacks rose, where the Iraqi police could not hold or secure an area after a tactical victory, where economic progress was lacking, and where no progress was made in political conciliation. Furthermore, al-Qa'ida showed it could quickly find replacements and that limited tactical successes had little impact on its operations or the overall pattern of Sunni insurgent activity.

SECTARIAN VIOLENCE AND THE ROLE OF THE SHI'ITES

The extensive role played by Shi'ite militias in death squads became increasingly apparent in the wake of sectarian violence that stemmed from the Askariya shrine bombing on February 22, 2006. The numerous assassinations that took place during this time, many of which were conducted by such Shi'ite groups, accounted for more than four times as many deaths in March as bombings and other mass-casualty attacks according to military data.[166]

This led U.S. officials to assert in early April 2006 that Shi'ite militias posed the greatest threat to Iraqi security and would be the most daunting and long-term challenge for the Iraqi government. Echoing these concerns, in an interview with the BBC that same month, Ambassador Khalilzad described militia groups as the infrastructure of a civil war.[167] In addressing the issue, however, the United States still

deferred to the Iraqi MOI and Ministry of Defense (MOD). "They [the Iraqi government] recognize the problem. But there's been no decision as to what to do about it," said Maj. Gen. Joseph Peterson, the top U.S. officer working with Iraq's police force.[168]

The May 2006 "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report labeled "terrorists and foreign fighters . . . the most serious and immediate threat during this reporting period."[169] In addition, it flatly acknowledged that militias had been involved in sectarian violence and that they had been successful in infiltrating some members into the ISF, a worry mentioned in the February report:

> Militia groups help both maintain and undermine security in Iraq, as well as contribute to achieving the goals of their affiliated political parties. In many cases, these militias, whether authorized or not, provide protection for people and religious sites where the Iraqi police are perceived to be unable to provide adequate support. Sometimes they work with the Iraqi police. In some cases, they operate as a power base for militia leaders trying to advance their own agendas. Militia leaders influence the political process through intimidation and hope to gain influence with the Iraqi people through politically based social welfare programs. Militias often act extra-judicially via executions and political assassinations—primarily perpetrated by large, well-organized Shi'a militia groups and some small Sunni elements. Militias are also sometimes engaged in purely criminal activity.
>
> Iraq's Kurds and some Shi'a Arabs generally view their militias as necessary and beneficial, but the existence of such armed groups exacerbates mistrust and tension within Iraq's population. The militias could also undermine the legitimacy of Iraq's new government and Security Forces and could challenge the country's unity . . .
>
> . . . Although some minor groups did disband [as ordered by The Transitional Administrative Law, Coalition Provisional Authority Order 91, and the Iraqi Constitution], the Badr Organization (which was entitled to government assistance) and Jaysh al-Mahdi (which was not, since its forces fought against the Coalition) have not disbanded. In addition, although some Peshmerga forces have joined the ISF, other units remain intact as the de facto security force for the Kurdish region. Although legally authorized, the special status accorded to the Peshmerga is an occasional source of contention with both Shi'a and Sunni leaders. Individual militia members have been incorporated into the ISF, but the loyalties of some probably still lie, to some extent, with their ethno-sectarian leaders. Shi'a militias, in particular, seek [to] place members into Army and police units as a way to serve their interests and gain influence. This is particularly evident in the Shi'a dominated south, where militia members have hindered the implementation of objective law enforcement.
>
> Shi'a militias have been involved in sectarian violence. Tactics employed by such militias have varied, including death squads, Sharia courts, and campaigns of intimidation. Shi'a militias, including the Badr Organization and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), have been accused of committing abuses against Sunni civilians, exacerbating sectarian tensions. In addition, JAM is implicated in much of the unrest that followed the February 22 Samarra mosque bombing. The Shi'a militias receive arms and other support from Iran, reinforcing Sunni fears of Iranian domination and further elevating ethno-sectarian violence. JAM and some smaller Shi'a extremist groups have attacked both Sunni Arabs and Coalition forces. Because of the Iranian-sponsored training and

technological support, these operations are among the most lethal and effective conducted against Coalition forces.[170]

Insurgent Pressure on the Shi'ites to Move toward Civil War

The combination of the bombing of the Askariya shrine and the steady escalation of the Arab Sunni and Shi'ite fighting that had begun in 2003 caused a dramatic upsurge in sectarian violence in late February, resulting in the deaths of well over 300 Iraqis in five days. Shi'ite demonstrations in the streets of Iraq were numerous. Peaceful demonstrations were held across the Shi'ite-dominated south and in ethnically mixed cities such as Kirkuk.[171]

Statements by participants and average civilians from this point onward gave growing indications that Shi'ite patience had worn out. A Shi'ite employee of the Trade Ministry stated this much to a reporter: "You have a TV, you follow the news . . . Who is most often killed? Whose mosques are exploded? Whose society was destroyed?" The same individual appeared to emphasize the advantage that sheer size would bring the Shi'ites in any civil conflict saying, "If they have 100 people, we have millions . . . Look at these people [motioning toward the demonstrators] I'm just a drop in this ocean."[172]

Demonstrations and condemnations came from both Sunni and Shi'ite political leaders. However, Shi'ite militias such as al-Sadr's Mahdi Army sought revenge against Sunnis and carried out numerous killings and attacks on Sunni mosques. Sunni groups reciprocated. By noon on the day of the bombing, attacks were already being reported on Sunnis and Sunni mosques, allegedly by the Mahdi Army. One such attack on a Sunni mosque that occurred in a mixed neighborhood near Sadr City was recounted in a *New York Times* article the following day:

> . . . Ahmed al-Samarai, who lives in front of the mosque, said he saw about seven cars full of men wearing black, the signature Mahdi dress, fire machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades at the mosque, gouging a large hole in a side wall.
>
> They entered the building and led away a man who performs the call to prayer, Abu Abdullah, telling his wife and three children to leave the building, Mr. Samarai said. They returned later, poured gasoline in the mosque, and set it on fire. Neighbors are still looking for Mr. Abdullah.[173]

One Iraqi described the environment: "We didn't know how to behave. Chaos was everywhere."[174] Even the more moderate Shi'ite newspaper *Al Bayyna al Jadidah* urged Shi'ites to assert themselves in the face of Sunni violence. Its editorial stated that it was "time to declare war against anyone who tries to conspire against us, who slaughters us every day. It is time to go to the streets and fight those outlaws."[175]

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani also hinted Shi'ites should take a more active posture saying, "If the security systems are unable to secure necessary protection, the believers are able to do so with the might of God."[176]

Sunni politicians alleged that Sunni mosques in Baghdad and some southern cities were either attacked or actively occupied by the Mahdi Army in the days following

the attacks.[177] The Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS), a hard-line Sunni clerical organization, alleged on Thursday that 168 Sunni mosques were attacked, 10 imams were killed, and 15 were abducted.[178] Other, more objective estimates, however, put the number of mosques attacked at around 30.[179] The association also made direct appeals to al-Sadr to intervene and stop the violence, apparently suspecting he was a primary coordinator of the Shi'ite attacks. Using a title of respect, Abdul Salam al-Kubaisi of the AMS said, "I call on Sayyid Moqtada Sadr and remind him what happened to the blood of both of us in Fallujah, Karbala and Najaf."[180]

In some Sunni areas, residents, fearing attacks on their mosques, erected barricades and stood watch. In Al Moalimin district, armed men patrolled the roof of the Sunni mosque Malik bin Anas.[181]

The escalating cycle of sectarian violence that followed the attack, including many reprisal attacks by Shi'ite militias, continued relatively unabated through March and into April. The Islamist extremist insurgents, whose goal it was to push Iraq into a civil war, apparently assessed that they had come close after the Askariya attack and tried to replicate the act through further attacks on Shi'ite holy sites.

Although it is unclear that the bombings were directly related, on April 6, 7, and 8, suicide attacks and car bombs either struck directly at or very close to several Shi'ite holy sites. On April 6, a car bomb exploded near the sacred Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, killing 10 and injuring 30. One day later, three suicide bombers targeted the Baratha mosque in Baghdad, a primary headquarters for SCIRI, killing more than 80 and wounding more than 140. The Iraqi Health Ministry stated that 90 were killed and over 170 were wounded. The next day, a car bomb killed six people and wounded 14 near a Shi'ite shrine south of Baghdad.[182]

These bombings were a typical tactic used by Islamist insurgents. They often attacked Shi'ite civilians on days marking religious observation or during religious gatherings and occasionally attacked mosques directly. The near "success" of the February 22 bombing caused these insurgents to mix the horror of mass-casualty suicide attacks with the impact of attacking sites of religious significance in an attempt to stall the political process and prod the Shi'ites into reprisal attacks and civil war.

The reaction by Shi'ite political and religious leaders was still similar to that after February 22 in that they urged restraint among their followers. At a rally of SCIRI supporters shortly after the series of April bombings, the head of the party, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, addressed the crowd: "This nation will not fall into the trap of sectarian war that is being pursued by Zarqawi's group."[183] In practice, however, that was what many Shi'ites were doing.

The clerics of both Shi'ite and Sunni factions played a wide mix of roles in both instigating and limiting the violence and were able to escalate or deescalate by controlling their followers during this time. This activist role of clerics was in contrast to the secular rule that had been the norm in Iraq both before and during Saddam's era.[184] "The clerics are the kingmakers, the peacemakers and the war-makers," said Ismael Zayer, editor of an Iraqi newspaper. A political scientist at Baghdad University, Hassan Bazzaz, concurred, "If the religious leaders decided to go all the way to a civil war they could, in no time."[185]

Al-Sadr, the Mahdi Army, and Civil War

This climate also aided al-Sadr. Al-Sadr now ordered his Mahdi militia to protect Shi'ite shrines across Iraq and blamed the United States and the Iraqi government for failing to protect the Askariya shrine saying, "If the government had real sovereignty, then nothing like this would have happened."[186] In a speech from Basra, al-Sadr also called for restraint and unity among Iraqis, "We got rid of the evil Saddam and now we have a new dictatorship, the dictatorship of Britain, the US and Israel. . . I call on Muslims, Sunnis and Shi'ites, to be brothers. . . Faith is the strongest weapons, not arms.[187] He also ordered his listeners not to attack mosques in retaliation saying, "There is no Sunni mosques and Shi'ite mosques, mosques are for all Muslims. . . it is one Islam and one Iraq." He also called for "a united peaceful demonstration in Baghdad" and labeled "Ba'athists and extremists" as "the enemy."[188]

Yet, there were numerous accusations that the Mahdi Army was conducting attacks against Sunni individuals and destroying and occupying Sunni mosques across Iraq despite these calls for restraint and unity. While it was difficult to prove that the Mahdi Army was responsible for many such attacks, individual accounts by victims seemed credible.

Despite a series of coordinated Sunni retaliatory attacks that were carried out in Sadr City in Baghdad on March 13, al-Sadr publicly called for restraint. After numerous car bombs and mortar attacks killed over 50 and wounded nearly 200, al-Sadr still avoided publicly blaming Iraqi Sunnis and instead held the United States and al-Qa'ida culpable.[189] At a news conference, al-Sadr declared, "I can fight the terrorists. I am able to face them, militarily and spiritually. . . but I don't want to slip into a civil war. Therefore, I will urge calm."[190]

The fact remained, however, that the Mahdi militia had become the primary security provider in Sadr City and a number of other Shi'ite areas. Checkpoints were established throughout the neighborhoods and patrols were conducted by armed young men in soccer jerseys or black uniforms now associated with al-Sadr's followers.[191]

Al-Sadr now controlled six ministries, had 30 loyalists in parliament, and had at least nominal control over the Mahdi militia, which could call upon some 60,000 fighters nationwide. These factors and his antioccupation stance meant that al-Sadr would play a key role in the escalating civil conflict. Al-Sadr had the potential to use his political and military power to his advantage, making U.S./Iraqi efforts at security and political compromise obsolete. However, al-Sadr also faced challenges; the Mahdi Army developed rogue components outside of his command, and there were several attempts within the Iraqi government to control al-Sadr's political power.

Much of al-Sadr's power came from his large, poor Shi'ite base. As the sectarian fighting escalated, the success of al-Sadr's movement had its roots in his organization's ability to provide for suffering Shi'ite families while the Iraqi government appeared to do nothing. In an interview, one Sadr aide used terms such as "charity" and "public defense" when describing the duties of the Mahdi Army. Dr. Yousif

al-Nasry stated that the army was not only helping Sadr City, but all of Iraq's poor and weak citizens and had helped to build schools and clean city streets in the absence of government services.[192]

Al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army's aid to displaced Shi'ite families arriving in Sadr City furthered their image as a benevolent force in the Shi'ite community. Those families, which fled the sectarian violence occurring in their home cities, were greeted by a network of Sadr followers already in place to give them shelter in mosques and community centers.[193]

Militia Infiltration into Iraqi Security Forces

Sh'ite militia infiltration into Iraq's rapidly growing security forces, and particularly the National Police and regular police, increased after the Askariya mosque bombing. However, it was clear that the infiltration had not begun overnight and that many elements of the militias had been embedded in the security forces since 2004. It was a steady process that had already accelerated sharply in 2005 and which acting Prime Minister Jaafari allowed to grow much worse after the bombing of the mosque.

The British police training effort in southern Iraq acknowledged that fighters from the Badr Organization and the Mahdi Army had successfully infiltrated the police. Local Iraqi officials denounced what they viewed as excessively "random arrests" and threatened to suspend relations with British forces until the men were released. Maj. Peter Cripps, a British military spokesman in Basra, defended the arrests saying that those arrested "were all part of the former internal affairs department that was disbanded by the Ministry of Interior and are now in the criminal intelligence unit and the serious crimes unit. They are alleged to be following their own agenda including, corruption, assassinations and persecutions of citizens."[194]

The British cited the role of militias in the security forces as one of the factors that contributed to the decline of the security situation in Basra, where murder rates doubled to more than one per day between November 2005 and February 2006. The Basra police chief stated that more than half of the 12,000 member forces were militia members and that he could trust only a quarter of his officers. British efforts to instill humane treatment techniques in local police and teach them forensic investigative methods were frustrated by the release of a video showing British soldiers beating a group of young, unarmed Iraqi boys.[195]

The growing distrust between the British and certain parts of the new police force resulted in U.K. troops being asked to leave when they arrived for a meeting at a Basra station to discuss equipment and professional development. The Iraqi officer who instructed them to do so said he had received a call from his superior who threatened his job if he allowed the British to enter.[196]

Tensions between British troops and Shi'ites in Basra flared again in May when a British helicopter crashed in a populated area. When British soldiers arrived on the scene, they were pelted with rocks and even Molotov cocktails from demonstrators,

estimated to be around 300, cheering the wrecked Lynx helicopter. During the clash, five Iraqis and several British troops were injured.[197]

Although initial reports did not state the cause of the crash, in subsequent days British intelligence indicated that it was likely a surface-to-air missile, possibly of Iranian origin.[198] British officials said that a splinter group of the Mahdi Army, backed by fundamentalists in Iran, was responsible for the violence that followed when the soldiers arrived to rescue any survivors of the crash. Intelligence sources also indicated that there were groups that had broken off from the Mahdi Army and were no longer under the control of al-Sadr, but were rather being supplied and funded by terror groups from within Iran.[199] This caused Lt. Gen. Sir Rob Fry, Deputy Commander of all MNF-I, to assert that if the Iraqi government failed to take control of the militias in Basra, than British troops would be used to clear them out.

These allegations led to growing investigations after early 2006. Enough evidence and outcry had accumulated to force the MOI to launch an investigation into allegations it was supporting death squads. This investigation, however, focused only on one incident in which 22 Iraqi police were briefly detained by U.S. authorities on their way to kill a Sunni prisoner in their custody.[200]

This event led to the first public acknowledgement by the Iraqi MOI that death squads operated within its own department and in the MOD. During a press conference in March, Bayan Jabr, Minister of Interior, said, "The death squads that we have captured are in the defense and interior ministries . . . There are people who have infiltrated the army and the interior."[201]

Only one month later, however, Jabr made a statement to the contrary. In April he said that these death squads were members of private security forces, not government forces. He said that such private companies employ 180,000 security agents, many of whom "are uniformed like the police, their cars like the police." Similarly, he stated, "Terrorists or someone who supports the terrorists . . . are using the clothes of the police or the military."[202] In May, he reiterated this claim, but upped the number of private security agents to 200,000.[203] There was some evidence to support this. Police uniforms, insignia, and equipment were available at some markets. Reportedly, patches with the emblem of the Iraqi police, "IP," were available for as little as 35¢, and entire uniforms could be purchased for $13.50.[204]

Nevertheless, the Iraqi government clearly had growing problems in controlling elements of the ISF and in trying to get these groups to uphold the law rather than engage in or tacitly allow violence. For example, after a public warning issued on April 7 by the MOI telling Iraqis not to gather in crowded areas because of specific intelligence indicating a series of car bombs were likely, it had to similarly warn the ISF not to impede this order. The ministry threatened legal action against "any security official who fails to take the necessary procedures to foil any terrorist attack in his area."[205]

In what may have been the largest incident involving MOI security forces at the time, gunmen wearing MOI uniforms allegedly stormed a Sunni-owned security firm in early March 2006 and abducted 50 of its employees.[206] The Interior Ministry denied its involvement in the event. Later in the same month, investigators

discovered and broke up a group of police who ran a kidnapping and extortion ring. Allegedly led by an Iraqi police major general, this group kidnapped individuals, sometimes killing them, and forced their families to pay ransoms that its members then pocketed.[207] In April, the bodies of three young men were recovered from a sewage ditch. According to co-workers, the three were last seen being arrested by MOI forces after their minibus had been pulled over.[208] In May, two employees of the al-Nahrain television station were kidnapped on their way home by MOI forces according to witnesses. Their bodies were found the next day, along with six other Sunni men. All had been blindfolded, burned with cigarette butts, and severely beaten.[209]

Although the MOI continued to deny that it had any role in the increased sectarian violence since the February shrine bombing, such accusations mounted, the accumulation of incidents made this denial more difficult, and the role of the government in trying to suppress such violence became more suspect. The consistency and continuation of "body dumps," the corpses often exhibiting signs of torture and being shot execution style, and strings of abductions in which the gunmen wore ISF uniforms furthered tension between al-Jaafari and the United States, which had been pressuring the prime minister to rein in the militias. The fear generated within the Sunni community by the merging of Shi'ite militias and the ISF was illustrated by an advisory on a Sunni-run television network that told its viewers not to allow Iraqi police or soldiers into their homes unless U.S. troops were present.[210]

This helped the Coaltion in some respects. For some Sunnis, the presence of U.S. forces provided a degree of assurance against abuses of power by Iraqi security forces. In Dora, local leaders agreed that Iraqi forces could conduct raids in mosques only if U.S. soldiers accompanied them. This same rule was later implemented in Baghdad as well. The fact that Sunnis requested the presence of U.S. troops in Islamic holy places during searches, something that earlier would have been inconceivable, was a testament to the depth of sectarian divides and the genuine distrust between the Shi'ite-dominated police forces and Sunni communities.[211] As Ali Hassan, a Sunni, bluntly stated, "We prefer to be detained by Americans instead of Iraqis. Second choice would be the Iraqi army. Last choice, Iraqi police."[212]

Al-Jaafari's failure to act made things worse and further alienated him from the United States. In late March, the U.S. administration openly voiced its disapproval of al-Jaafari as the next prime minister. Ambassador Khalilzad added that due to his lack of leadership, Shi'ite-led militias were now killing more Iraqis than the Sunni insurgency.[213]

Al-Jaafari's response, which warned the United States not to interfere with the democratic process in Iraq, addressed the issue of Shi'ite militias being incorporated in the security forces and his political alliance with al-Sadr, whose support put him in office. He stated that he favored engaging with al-Sadr and his followers instead of isolating him and that he viewed the militias as part of Iraq's "*de facto* reality." He continued to voice support for a government that looks past sectarian differences and works toward integrating the militias into the police and the army.[214]

In April, Iraq's Interior Minister Jabr refused to deploy any of the thousands of police recruits trained by the joint U.S.–U.K. Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT). Although graduates of this program had been available for over three months, Jabr chose to hire those trained outside of the program because he said he had no control over CPATT's selection process. The United States was concerned that this was an attempt by the minister to sustain the sectarian makeup of the forces and continue to incorporate those with allegiance to the Badr Brigade into its ranks.[215]

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq's Human Rights Report specifically highlighted the threat of militias within the security forces and said that it had received information "regarding the actions of some segments of the security forces, in particular the police and special forces, and their apparent collusion with militias in carrying out human rights violations."[216]

There were concerns that even Iraqi brigades that were "mixed," in that they struck a balance between Shi'ites and Sunnis within their ranks, were still overwhelmingly Shi'ite. There were reports of at least one soldier who was proudly wearing an al-Sadr T-shirt under his army uniform. In interviews as well, many of the soldiers privately confided that if they were ever asked to fight the Mahdi Army, they would have to quit the Iraqi forces.[217] Brig. Gen. Abdul Kareem Abdul Rahman al-Yusef, a Sunni, admitted that his brigade was 87-percent Shi'ite and included members of the Badr Organization. Despite this, he still believed that "it's not the time to ask the militias to put down their arms," given that the government cannot provide security to its citizens.[218]

While details were still uncertain, events of a two-day fire fight in the Adhamiyah district, a Sunni neighborhood, indicated the possibility that a local Sunni militia had taken up arms against what it saw as an attack by a Shi'ite death squad disguised as a police force. In the process, some locals remarked that the Sunni-dominated army, responding with the United States to engage "insurgents," actually fired on the incoming police forces.[219]

Many U.S. soldiers who were now on their second tour in Iraq found that they were returning to a different war. Where the previous focus had been on the Sunni insurgency, it now was about containing the Shi'ite militias and preventing further infiltration into the security forces.[220]

As Lt. Col. Chris Pease, deputy commander of the U.S. military's police training programs in eastern Baghdad put it, "We're not stupid. We know for a fact that they're killing people. We dig the damn bodies out of the sewer all of the time. But there's a difference between knowing something and proving something."[221] Capt. Ryan Lawrence, an intelligence officer with the 2nd Brigade Special Police Transition Team, displayed similar feelings, "Training and equipping a force, while knowing that at least some element is infiltrated by militias, is a difficult situation."[222]

Pease also admitted that an Iraqi police officer had confided in him the reality and the extent of the militia infiltration into the ISF. "His assessment was that the militias are everywhere," Pease said, "and his officers weren't going to do anything about that

because their units are infiltrated and they know what the cost would be for working against the militias."[223]

Although U.S. troops accompanied developing Iraqi units on raids to ensure proper treatment of detainees, the line between counterinsurgency and revenge became blurry for Coalition soldiers. After a joint U.S.–Iraqi raid in March in which ten Sunnis were rounded up, one U.S. colonel remembered thinking immediately afterwards, "Wait a sec, were we just part of some sort of sectarian revenge?"[224]

The Iraqi government denied claims that Interior Ministry forces had been involved. Rather it suggested that insurgent groups, portraying themselves as police and security forces, provoked the violence. It specifically identified those groups as the Islamic Army of Iraq, the 1920 Revolution Brigades, and al-Qa'ida.[225] While the government claims could not be verified, al-Qa'ida in Iraq did issue a statement promising "a new raid to avenge the Sunnis at Adhamiyah and the other areas, and the raid will start with the dawn of Wednesday, if God wishes. . . The Shiite areas will be an open battlefield for us."[226]

While it was not clear if Shi'ite police forces were even present, or if the army was mistaken for a police force as suggested by U.S. claims, the event illustrated a growing distrust between Sunnis and Iraqi security forces. The threat from Shi'ite death squads, whether real or perceived, caused the townspeople to arm themselves, coordinate action, and attempt to repel the invading police forces.

Iraqi Government Efforts to "Solve" the Militia Problem

The lack of government leadership, and real progress toward conciliation, was a key factor in all these trends. The election of Nouri al-Maliki as the prime minister had only mixed results. The reality proved to be very different.

In May, Iraqi leaders debated putting all of Iraq's police and interior security forces in the capital under a "unified command" rather than having them divided between various ministries. The goal of this rearrangement was to curb sectarian divisions within the forces, diminish the presence of Coalition forces on the streets, and to instill confidence in Iraq's citizens and send a message that the Iraqi government was capable of bringing security to Baghdad. The logic behind such a move was summed up by Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi, "No one knows who is who right now—we have tens of thousands of forces. We need a unified force to secure Baghdad: same uniform, same patrol car, one commander."[227]

Many remained skeptical of the plan, emphasizing that simply restructuring the forces by putting them all together would do little to solve the internal sectarian divides or diminish the presence of militias and death squads within the forces. For some U.S. advisors and diplomats in Iraq, a "big-bang" solution seemed unlikely to solve the problems plaguing Iraq's security forces. These same officials assessed that it was not so much about the structure or command of the forces, but Iraqi political will to confront the issue and implement what would be difficult and controversial solutions.[228]

Sunnis, most often the victims of Shi'ite death squads, similarly did not see this proposal as a workable solution. Baha Aldin Abdul Qadir, a spokesman for the Iraqi Islamic Party said, "If we [consolidate] the militias and put them in the official forces of the Interior and Defense ministries, this will convey the problem [of the militia's own violent agendas] to these ministries."[229] He suggested that if absorption of militias into security forces were to occur, it would have to be limited to the integration of these members into only civilian positions such as public-works programs or be stationed as border guards in remote areas.[230]

A much smaller scale version of this plan began to be implemented in May. The Interior Ministry issued new and distinctive badges and seals for the Facilities Protection Service, a group of more than 145,000 building guards that were increasingly independent from any command or ministry according to U.S. and Iraqi officials. Initially established by L. Paul Bremer in 2003, the armed units numbered no more than 4,000 and were charged with protecting the facilities of various ministries, but were not under control of either the Defense or Interior Ministry. Because these forces lacked any formal accountability and wore similar uniforms to the other police and security forces, officials speculated that these were the units that were often implicated by Iraqis in abductions, executions, and body dumps that instead had long been blamed on the interior police force.[231]

THE KURDISH QUESTION

The "Kurdish Question" continued to be a problem; the Kurds focused on the future of Kirkuk, which was given special importance after the national elections, not only for the Kurds, but for Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Turkomans as well. Tensions between Kurds and other Iraqis rose significantly during this period.

The Issue of Kirkuk

The issue of Kirkuk was taking on a growing importance. Prior to the December 2005 election, thousands of Kurds erected settlements in the city, often with financing from the two main Kurdish parties. In addition, violence began to rise, with 30 assassination-style killings from October through December. Kurdish political groups were increasingly open about their intent to incorporate Kirkuk into Iraqi Kurdistan and continue to repatriate Kurds into the city in an effort to tip the ethnic balance in their favor. They statedthat they sought to accomplish this by the time of the popular referendum in 2007, which is to determine whether Tamim Province will be governed by the Kurdish regional government or from Baghdad.[232] The future of Kirkuk would be a central factor for Kurdish political groups as they worked to form a governing coalition.

The nomination of al-Jaafari for prime minister further frustrated Kurdish politicians. They accused him of being slow to implement Article 58 of the constitution that stipulated that the question of the "normalization" of Kirkuk must take place by the end of 2007.[233] In fact, the political alliance between Kurds and Shi'ites, once

considered natural given their common grievances against the Sunni-dominated Ba'ath Party, was opening up to question.[234]

In April 2006, Shi'ite militias began to deploy to Kirkuk in substantial numbers. According to U.S. Embassy officials in the region, the Mahdi Army had sent two companies with 120 men each. The Badr Organization extended its reach into the city as well and opened several offices across the Kurdish region. The influx of Shi'ite militias began in the days following the February 22 Askariya bombing. The shift northward was justified by the organizations as a necessary step to protect Shi'ite mosques and families. Yet Shi'ites, many of whom were transferred to the area under Saddam's rule, made up only about 5 percent of the population in the area.[235]

Although Iraqi security officials in Kirkuk maintained that the new militia arrivals generally kept a low profile, the Kurdish Peshmerga responded by moving nearly 100 additional troops to the area. Moreover, a Sadr associate in the region, Abdul Karim Khalifa, told U.S. officials that more men were on the way and that as many as 7,000 to 10,000 local residents loyal to the Mahdi Army would join in a fight if one were to come.[236]

Tensions between Kurds and Other Iraqis

Kurdish views of the increased sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs differed. One perspective had its roots in the historical animosity between Kurds and Arabs. A sectarian civil war could bring benefits to the Kurds if, as one individual said, "our enemies [are] killing each other."[237] According to this theory, if civil war broke out in Iraq, the Kurds would then be justified in breaking away to form an independent Kurdistan. In this situation, the international community would be forced to acquiesce to such a move.[238]

The opposite perspective was more hesitant and less optimistic. These individuals worried that although civil war would initially begin in central and southern Iraq, it could spread northward, threatening the stability and relative security they have attained since the 2003 invasion. In fact, there were some reports in the first months of 2006 that Shi'ite militias were migrating north into cities like Kirkuk and moving into mosques in the area as a protection force.[239] If civil war did reach the Kurds, some believed Iraqi Arabs, as well as Turkey, Syria, and Iran, would object to Kurdish separation and that countries such as Turkey that have sizable Kurdish populations would intervene militarily to prevent an independent Kurdish nation.[240]

The Kurdish militias presented fewer problems for Iraqi security and Iraqi force development than the Shi'ite militias, but the deployment of Shi'ite militias into the Kirkuk area made it clear that this was no guarantee for the future. Kurdish separatism and claims to areas like Kirkuk and Iraq's northern oil fields remained potentially explosive issues. Thousands of Kurdish Peshmerga soldiers were incorporated into the Iraqi Army during the formation of Iraqi forces.[241] The Kurdish adage, "the Kurds have no friends," seemed to hold true here as well. While Kurdish army units could operate effectively in their relatively ethnically homogenous north, they were often perceived as outsiders in Arab areas.

Even in the city of Balad in March 2006, a 700-man Kurdish army battalion was confined to its base by an angry and hostile Sunni population. The battalion, sent from Sulaimaniyah to bolster the lone Shi'ite forces comprised of local residents, was resisted by the large Sunni minority in the area so much so that commanders were afraid to let their soldiers leave the base. U.S. officials in the city said that this was because the battalion was mostly former Peshmerga.[242]

In May, a Kurdish-dominated army unit openly clashed with its Shi'ite counterpart. The 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 4th Division hit a roadside bomb in Duluiyah north of Baghdad. Although U.S. and Iraqi officials disagreed over the number of dead and wounded in the incident, the Kurdish division raced its wounded to the U.S. hospital in Balad. According to police reports, when the Kurdish troops arrived, they began firing their weapons, ostensibly to clear the way, killing a Shi'ite civilian. As security forces arrived, the Kurdish troops attempted to leave and take their wounded elsewhere. A Shi'ite army unit from the 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade tried to stop them and shots were exchanged, killing a member of the 3rd Battalion. As the Kurdish troops attempted to leave in their vehicles, a third army unit attempted to establish a roadblock to stop them. U.S. forces, however, were at the scene to intervene and restore calm.[243]

THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE STATES

The rise in ethnic and sectarian violence and the *de facto* state of low-level civil war that existed after the Askariya shrine bombing heightened concerns of neighboring states that a regional war could break out. There were increased accusations of Iranian influence in Iraq and active support for Shi'ite militias. In general, however, the risk of regional war between Sunnis and Shi'ites remained a distant possibility.

A Sunni-Shi'ite Clash within a Civilization?

The growing predictions that the sectarian violence in Iraq was the first step of a clash between Sunni and Shi'ites in 2006 that would polarize the Gulf and the Middle East were exaggerated. The fact remained, however, that this was part of the future that bin Laden, al-Zarqawi, and other neo-Salafi extremists were seeking to create. The battle in Iraq was only part of the much broader struggle by such neo-Salafi extremists to capture the Arab and Islamic worlds. The outcome in Iraq would be critical but only part of a much broader struggle.

There was also a growing risk that countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia would increase support and funding for their respective sectarian constituents in Iraq: Shi'ite and Sunni, respectively. Although this would not be the "clash" envisioned by Islamist extremists, it could take the form of a power struggle between neighboring Shi'ite and Sunni countries that is played out in a weakened Iraqi state.[244]

As sectarian conflict continued and efforts were stalled over forming a unity government in the spring of 2006, it was reported in April that intelligence officials from Arab states, including Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the

United Arab Emirates, and Turkey, had met to discuss the strategic and regional implications of an Iraqi civil war and Iran's ongoing role in the country. The revelation of this meeting came on the heels of remarks by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that "most of the Shiites are loyal to Iran and not to the countries they are living in," and suggested that "Iraq is almost close to destruction."[245] Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish leaders quickly denounced these suggestions. Al-Jaafari expressed astonishment "that Egypt identifies Iraq's security problems as a civil war."[246]

One day after Mubarak made these comments, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said that since the definition of a civil war is people fighting each other within a country, then Iraq is in a civil war. In addition, he suggested that the Arab League undertake an effort to help address the ongoing civil conflict. He added, however, that only "Iraqis themselves can stop this fighting."[247]

At a British-Saudi conference, Prince Saud al-Faisal emphasized the danger posed to countries in the region by a civil war in Iraq. "The threat of break-up in Iraq is a huge problem for the countries of the region, especially if the fighting is on a sectarian basis. This type of fighting sucks in other countries," Prince Saud said.[248]

The Role of Iran

New complaints regarding Iranian interference in Iraq were leveled against Iran in March 2006 by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who accused Iran of deploying its Revolutionary Guard to Iraq. He said that Iran was "putting people into Iraq to do things that are harmful to the future of Iraq," and that it was something that Tehran would "look back on as having been an error in judgment."[249] That same month, President Bush asserted that "Tehran has been responsible for at least some of the increasing lethality of anti-coalition attacks by providing Shi'a militia with the capabilities to build improvised explosive devices in Iraq."[250]

In late June, Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., warned against Iran's support for violent Shi'ite groups in Iraq, implicating Iran in supplying insurgents with the weaponry and training to confront U.S. forces. He said that the American forces "are quite confident that the Iranians are providing weapons, improvised explosive devices, technology and training to Shia extremist groups."[251] One indication of Iranian support was the increase in the number of attacks with bombs that feature shaped charges, which focus the explosive power in a single direction.[252] Casey also noted that extremist groups were conducting training in Iran, and in some cases, probably Lebanon, indicating that they "are using surrogates to conduct terrorist operations in Iraq."[253]

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad had made similar allegations in March. He accused Iran of publicly supporting Iraq's political process while it clandestinely trained and aided Shi'ite militia groups as well as Sunni insurgent organizations such as Ansar al-Sunna. He stated, "Our judgment is that training and supplying, direct or indirect, takes place, and that there is also provision of financial resources to people, to militias, and that there is a presence of people associated

with the Revolutionary Guard and with MOIS [Ministry of Intelligence and Security]."[254]

Khalilzad's comments came as the United States and Iran announced that they had agreed to hold direct talks for the first time on how to reduce the violence in Iraq. These talks, scheduled to take place in Iraq, were at the request of SCIRI leader Abdul al-Hakim, who had solicited Iranian assistance in the past. Ambassador Khalilzad, who had also reached out to Tehran's leaders, was to receive the Iranian negotiators when they arrived.[255]

Both sides came to the talks with minimal expectations. In addition, U.S. officials remained adamant that the discussions would be narrowly focused on Iraqi security issues and would not include the Iranian nuclear program. In statements leading up to the talks, it appeared Tehran saw them as an opportunity to change Washington's behavior, while the United States indicated that Iran's desire to meet was an indication that it was realizing that its defiant posture was not working.

Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, made the announcement to the Iranian parliament saying, "I think Iraq is a good testing ground for America to take a hard look at the way it acts. . . If there's a determination in America to take that hard look, then we're prepared to help." He went on to indicate that Iran was willing to help the United States in Iraq, but only under the condition that the "United States should respect the vote of the people. Their Army must not provoke from behind the scenes."[256]

Yet U.S. officials such as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice emphasized that the negotiations would focus only on Iraq. National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley added optimistically, however, that Iran was "finally beginning to listen."[257] The announcement of these negotiations drew a strong condemnation from the Iraqi Consensus Front, Iraq's dominant Sunni political party. In a statement it called the negotiations "an obvious unjustified interference" and added, "It's not up to the American ambassador to talk to Iran about Iraq."[258]

Iran faced a dilemma. It benefited from U.S. support for Iraq to help it deal with the insurgency and provide economic aid. Yet, it feared being "encircled" by the U.S. presence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf. Iranian officials threatened to destabilize Iraq if the United States brought military pressure against Iran because of its alleged nuclear weapons program. A split in Iraq's government could lead some Shi'ite factions to actively turn to Iran for support, and the divisions in Iran's government created the ongoing risk that hard-line elements might intervene in Iraq even if its government did not fully support such action. In early 2006, however, these seemed to be risks rather than realities.

9

The Fourth Iraqi Government and Civil Conflicts: Summer 2006

May 20, 2006 The government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki takes power. A bomb explodes in Sadr City, killing 19 and wounding 58. In Qaim, 25 Sunni farmers are seized by Shi'ite militia from a Shi'ite neighborhood in retaliation for the abduction of Shi'ite truck drivers in Eshaqi. These types of retaliatory killings are typical in the months following the Samarra mosque bombing. Between 10 and 40 Iraqis continue to be found dead on the streets in Iraq daily.

June 7, 2006 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is killed in a U.S. airstrike in Diyala Province. Abu Ayyub al-Masri is named his successor shortly thereafter.

June 14, 2006 U.S. and Iraqi forces commence Operation Forward Together in Baghdad. This operation consists of about 70,000–75,000 men.

June 21, 2006 In the town of Taji, north of Baghdad, gunmen ambush dozens of factory workers in one of the largest mass kidnappings of the Iraq War. Interior Ministry officials said that as many as 125 people were abducted, as gunmen seized three buses carrying workers leaving a factory located in the largely Sunni area of Taji and owned by the Industry Ministry.

June 25, 2006 Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki unveils a 24-point National Reconciliation Plan to parliament, which calls for setting a timeline for Iraqi troops to take control of security throughout the country. The document also offers amnesty to insurgents who renounce violence and have not killed Iraqis. The

issue of whether amnesty would be granted to those who killed American forces is left ambiguous.

June 28, 2006 Eleven Sunni insurgent groups offer to immediately halt attacks on American-led forces in Iraq if Washington and the Iraqi government agree to withdraw all Coalition forces from the country within two years. The Islamic Army in Iraq, the Mohammed Army, and the Mujahedin Shura Council (including al-Qa'ida) are not part of the offer to the government.

July 6, 2006 A suicide car bomb kills at least 12 and wounds 37 when it rams into buses carrying Iranian pilgrims near a Shi'ite shrine in the city of Kufa. The Iranian government condemns the attack. It calls on the Iraqi government to punish those responsible and blames U.S. forces for their failure to provide security in the area.

July 23, 2006 Thirty-three civilians are killed and 60 are wounded when a car bomb explodes near a police station by an open market in Sadr City. At least 20 people are killed and 70 are wounded when another car bomb explodes near a courthouse in Kirkuk.

August 20, 2006 Snipers kill at least 16 people and injure 230, undertaking a series of attacks on a religious procession in Baghdad attended by hundreds of thousands of Shi'ite pilgrims.

August 31, 2006 At least 60 people are killed and 186 are wounded within a half-hour period in a series of apparently coordinated attacks on a Shi'ite section of Baghdad.

By the summer of 2006, Iraqis faced unprecedented levels of violence. Rather than an insurgency or conventional civil war, they faced a tangled set of warring factions as the prospects for national reconciliation grew more distant.

The changes in the dynamics of the fighting centered on the following set of trends:

- Ethnic and sectarian fighting was eclipsing the dominant threat posed by Sunni insurgents, both in terms of inflicting the majority of Iraqi casualties, as well as hindering political, social, and economic progress in the country. But while the visibility of the Sunni Arab insurgency declined amid heightened sectarian violence, it continued to pose a strong and viable danger to stability operations.
- Violence carried out by Sunni and Shi'ite factions appeared to be carving Baghdad, and the country as a whole, into sectarian zones, protected by various armed groups. Increasingly, violence became part of a sectarian struggle for territorial gains.
- Attack patterns indicated an upsurge in civilian casualties, which peaked in July, as well as an increase in the frequency of attacks against U.S. and Iraqi forces, primarily in the form of roadside bombs.

- Ethnic cleansing was forcing many Iraqis to relocate to areas where they were in the sectarian or ethnic majority, or flee the country altogether.
- The influence of militias was growing as a key obstacle to Coalition forces, underscored by a sensitive confrontation between Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and the United States.
- The Shi'ite community was showing signs of internal divisions—demonstrated through open confrontations between rivaling factions and fragmentation within militia groups.
- U.S. attention focused on curbing the heightened concentration of violence in Baghdad, while violence outside of the capital continued to intensify, particularly in key areas such as Basra, Kirkuk, and Mosul.
- Kurds were persistently pushing for complete autonomy, threatening constitutional deadlock, as well as intensification of the conflict over Kirkuk.

On the political front, the appointment of the Ministers of the Interior, Defense, and State for National Security Affairs in early June 2006 did complete the formation of the national unity government. At that time, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki laid out three primary pillars for his national strategy going forward: (1) working to heal ethnic and sectarian strife through a campaign of "national reconciliation," (2) strengthening Iraq's security forces and either absorbing or disbanding militias, and (3) rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure.[1]

The cornerstone of al-Maliki's program for political inclusion was the National Reconciliation and Dialogue Plan, which aimed to draw insurgent elements of the armed opposition into the political process. This initiative did demonstrate the nascent Iraqi government's willingness to put key issues on the table and to engage in unified talks with Sunni insurgent groups. However, the final document—which emerged after rounds of debate—was little more than a vague statement of principles that skirted around divisive issues, including conditions of amnesty for insurgents and the disbanding of militias. Moreover, the controversy unleashed in the process revealed conflicting agendas within the fledgling government, deeply divided along sectarian lines and plagued by historical tensions.

The result was that progress in political negotiations came to a near standstill, in spite of U.S. and other efforts. Economic conditions also continued to deteriorate. Iraqis faced a severe fuel crisis, joblessness, high inflation rates, and a burgeoning black market. Sorely needed reconstruction projects were hampered by insurgent attacks, rampant crime and corruption, a lack of consistent funding, delays, and poor logistical planning.

As the threat of civil war increased, some Iraqi politicians engaged in serious discussions on how to segregate the country along sectarian lines. Confronted by an increasingly volatile political, security, and economic environment, al-Maliki's ambitious national strategy was outstripped by more immediate concerns of holding the country together and restoring public faith in his government, which risked becoming a hollow shell of authority.

Meanwhile in Washington, U.S. officials came under increased pressure to explain and address the sharp deterioration in the Iraqi security environment. In spite of

growing skepticism of the U.S. presence in Iraq, the Bush administration remained firm in its resolve to stay the course and stay in the country until it was secured.

The one real area of progress was in the development of Iraqi forces, and American troops began handing over security responsibility in some areas to their Iraqi counterparts. In July, Muthanna became the first province to be placed completely under Iraqi authority. Yet, overall security conditions in the country were rapidly declining, leading some to question whether the new Iraqi security structure—infiltrated by an assortment of militias—could successfully secure the country without reverting to U.S. capabilities.

THE FOURTH IRAQI GOVERNMENT TAKES HOLD

On May 20, 2006, the Iraqi government announced that most of the cabinet had been appointed, although two key ministers had not been agreed upon. To fill these key spots, lawmakers made al-Maliki the acting Minister of Interior and one of the new Deputy Prime Ministers, Salam al-Zobaie, acting Minister of Defense. The Government of Iraq now had the following key members:[2]

- *Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki:* A graduate in Arabic letters and a leading figure in Al Da'wa. Maliki was Shi'ite Islamist and had been an exile for many years and had been sentenced to death by Saddam's courts. He had been a strong advocate of hard-line "de-Ba'athification," but had been a key negotiator in dealing with the Kurds, where he had shown flexibility over issues like Kirkuk, and in offering compromises to the Sunnis and promises to abolish the militias and negotiate with the less extreme Sunni insurgents. He was not an experienced leader or administrator, but had acquired a reputation for frankness, honesty, and a willingness to carry out meaningful negotiations.
- *Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih:* A former prime minister of the autonomous Kurdish area, closely tied to President Jalal Talabani and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Salih was given special responsibility for the economy and its reconstruction.
- *Deputy Prime Minister Salam al-Zobaie:* A new figure from the main Sunni party, the Accordance Front, the main Sunni Arab grouping. His background was more tribal than religious. He was given special responsibility for oversight of the security forces.
- *Finance Minister Bayan Jabr:* Jabr was a senior leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the strongest component of the Shi'ite alliance. He had previously been Minister of Interior, but had come to be seen as tolerating police death squads and giving men from the Badr Organization, SCIRI's armed wing, positions in the police. As Minister of Interior, he had overspent his budget.
- *Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani:* Shahristani had a technical background, but as a physicist; he had been jailed and tortured when he would not work on Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons program. He had no petroleum background and no practical background in managing large-scale industrial systems. His political experience was as ex-deputy parliamentary speaker.
- *Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari:* Zebari had already been foreign minister since 2003. He was a Kurd and former spokesman for the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) during the time of Saddam Hussein.

Three other major figures continued to play a major political role in shaping the conditions for developing Iraq politics without joining the government:

- *Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani:* Al-Sistani remained the most senior and revered Shi'ite cleric. He retained vast political influence and had played a major role in making the Shi'ite alliance compromise to choose Maliki, resisting pressures for sectarian conflict, and seeking compromises to keep Iraq unified, although he sometimes seemed to support federation.
- *Abdulaziz al-Hakim:* The leader of SCIRI and a key leader in the Shi'ite Alliance. Hakim had replaced his brother, Ayatollah Mohammed Baqer al-Hakim, as leader when the latter was killed in a bombing in August 2003. Hakim had been a spokesman for national unity and negotiations with the Shi'ites, but was also closely associated with the Badr Organization. Some felt he had ties to Iran and militia attacks on Sunnis.
- *Moqtada al-Sadr:* Al-Sadr remained the most activist Shi'ite religious leader, although he was still a relatively low-ranking cleric. A charismatic preacher, he continued to call for Coalition withdrawal and advocate a strongly religious Iraqi state. His "Mahdi Army" had made a major recovery from its defeat in two failed revolts in 2004, and his supporter had been given some 30 votes in the new assembly to keep him in the Shi'ite alliance. Six Sadr supporters had been made ministers.

The four changes of government in Iraq from 2003 to 2006 had culminated in producing political cleavages and sectarianism. A United States Institute of Peace (USIP) report summarized the beliefs and goals of Iraq's key political parties and described three similarities between Iraq's four governments and why they all contributed to political stalemate and sectarianism:

> First is their experience. Rapid political mobility and replacement of ministers was the standard in previous cabinets, but in this government is had intensified. Of the 46 members included in this group, only 11, or 24 percent, have held a position in the cabinet or the presidency before; the other 76 percent are newcomers. . .
>
> While rapid change from Saddam's time is to be expected, the persistence and magnitude of change in every government since 2003 is significant. It means, in essence, that the revolutionary process has probably not yet settled down despite recent elections. Equally important is what these changes portend for the acquisition of the necessary skills of governance by those in the leadership cadre. This accelerated pace of change had made it difficult for new leaders to acquire experience in national government: running a bureaucracy, creating institutions, establishing networks across ministries, and cultivating constituencies outside the central government.
>
> Second, the current leadership is still dominated by "outsiders," that is, by Iraqi exiles who have spent much of the their adult life, especially the last decade or two of Saddam's regime, outside Iraq, and Kurds, who have lived in the north, free from Saddam's control. Insiders, who lived in Saddam's Iraq and endured its hardships, are still a minority. A third of the current leadership is outsiders, with 20 percent who lived in the northern Kurdish region. Only 28 percent are insiders (Some 20 percent are unknown). Among this exile group, however, there had now been a shift in the locus of their exile. Western-educated leaders, who have lived for years in London, the US, or Continental

Europe and are relatively familiar with Western culture—for example, Adnan Pachachi and Ayad Allawi—have not disappeared from government or been reduced to a distinct minority. . .

The division between insiders and outsiders is one of the fault lines in the current political leadership that need to be bridged, and helps explain some of the lack of cohesion in the government.

The third and by far the most important characteristic of the current leadership is that at least half have spent the greater part of their adult life actively engaged in opposition to the Saddam regime in one or another political party. It is this experience that has done the most to shape their lives and attitudes. About half the leadership belonged to such opposition groups; only 28 percent had no such affiliation. . .

It is significant that almost all the Sunnis in the current government were in opposition parties, such as the Iraqi Islamic Party, or broke openly with the Ba'ath regime in some way. The results has been a profound distrust between the new leadership, composed manly of Shi'a and Kurdish opposition parties, and those associated with the old regime.[3]

A variety of groups was struggling against each other for power, but often for different reasons. Competition between "insiders" and "outsiders" and between those who actively worked against Saddam's regime and those who tacitly supported it hampered conciliation in the "national unity" government.

The USIP report went on to characterize the status of the different political parties and groups in the Maliki government in late 2006 as follows:

United Iraqi Alliance (UIA): A group of Shi'a parties designed to represent Iraq's Shi'a majority of 60–65 percent. . . . The backbone of the UIA is composed of three parties or groups: SCIRI, including the Badr Organization, its military wing; Da'wah Islamiyyah, including both Da'wah and Da'wah Tandhim al-Iraq branches; and the Sadrist Current.

Among these three, SCIRI is the best organized and best funded and may command about a quarter of the Shi'a vote. The most important members of SCIRI in the government are Vice President Adil Abd al-Mahdi and Minister of Finance Bayan Jabr . . . The key figure in the party, however, is a cleric, Abd al-Aziz Hakim, who is head of SCIRI and a deputy in the assembly but not in the cabinet.

SCIRI, formed in Iran in 1982 by Iraqi exiles there, is almost wholly Arab Shi'ah in composition, although it has added some Shi'ah Turkmen and Shi'ah Kurds to the mix. As its unwieldy title indicates, SCIRI was designed to gather several Shi'ah groups, including Da'wah and Islamic Action (Amal Islamiyyah) parties, under one umbrella. Although it was headed by an executive committee consisting of representatives of these parties, power soon gravitated into the hands of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, son of the former grand ayatollah, Muhsin al-Hakim, and an original participant in the Da'wah movement in Iraq, who became its driving force. In time the participation of the other Shi'ah parties diminished or evaporated, and SCIRI became essentially Hakim's vehicle.

In the crucible of the Iran-Iraq war and under Iranian tutelage, SCIRI developed an elaborate organizational structure, with numerous administrative bureaus to manage everything from finance to public relations, together with a broader-based congress to function as a sort of parliament. It also developed a military arm, the Badr Brigade, trained and, to some extent, officered by Iranians, which grew to about ten thousand

members by the end of that war. SCIRI also took in a number of the Iraqi POWs in Iran who reportedly "repented" and joined the new Islamic movement; these were known as Tawwabin (Repenters). SCIRI was well funded by Iran, as was its Badr Brigade, which took part in the war against Iraq, on the Iranian side.

SCIRI, although well organized at the executive level, is essentially under the authority of the Hakim family and strongly under the influence of clerical leadership. After the death of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim in the August 2003 explosion at the grand mosque in Najaf, leadership of the party fell to his younger brother, Abd al-Aziz, also a cleric, though not of the highest rank. Abd al-Aziz's uncle, Muhammad Sa'id al-Hakim, is currently one of the four grand ayatollahs in Najaf, with the network and rich charity resources that all such religious authorities command. Ammar al-Hakim, Abd al-Aziz's son, represents his father and heads an institute designed to pursue Hakim's objectives in southern Iraq. In addition, SCIRI relies for leadership on other clerics, such as Humam al-Hamudi, who headed the Constitutional Committee in 2005 and the Constitutional Review Committee in 2006. SCIRI, although well organized at the executive level, is essentially under the authority of the Hakim family and strongly under the influence of clerical leadership . . . SCIRI leaders, especially the Hakims, have come to be strong supporters of federalism and the establishment of a nine-province region in the center and south of Iraq, which they clearly hope to control . . . SCIRI also has the strongest ties of any party with Iran, which continues to fund and provide support to the party in numerous ways. But despite its long association with Iran and its history of separation with the West, SCIRI has been remarkably pragmatic in its dealings with the United States . . .

A second group within this Shi'a coalition is the Da'wah party, which has provided two elected prime ministers: Ibrahim al-Ja'fari (2005) and Nuri al-Maliki (2006). Although Da'wah has considerable popularity as the founder of the Islamic Shi'a movement in Iraq, it does not have the organization or militia possessed by SCIRI . . .

Da'wah is still more a movement than a political party. Its origins go back to the late 1950s, when its spiritual founder, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, a young cleric, galvanized a younger generation of Iraqi Shi'ah around a set of intellectual concepts for modernizing Islam. Despite Sadr's influence, however, the party leadership had strong lay components among the founders, and laypeople continue to play an important role in the party. Today its key figures, such as Prime Ministers Ibrahim al-Ja'fari and Nuri al-Maliki, are laymen, in contrast to SCIRI and the Sadrists, whose leaders (Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim and Muqtada al-Sadr) are clerics. In its struggle against the former regime, which came to a head in the 1970s and culminated in the execution of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and his sister in 1980, the movement attempted (without success) to appeal to a broader Iraqi community. Although the party is religious and Shi'a in orientation, its core has always had a strong Iraqi identity. Indeed, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were disputes in the party between those who agreed with the Iranian concept of *wilayat al-faqih* ("rule of the Islamic jurist") and those who rejected clerical rule. One such group, which included an educated younger generation, favored Iraqi nationalism and democracy.

The party has undergone considerable upheaval since its heyday in the 1970s. The Saddam regime hunted down and imprisoned or executed so many members that by the beginning of the 1980s, the party had virtually disappeared in Iraq. Most of today's Da'wah leaders, including Maliki and Ja'fari, fled Iraq in the early 1980s. Some

remained in Iran, others went to London, and others went to Syria and Lebanon, where they joined the Shi'ah opposition there. In these years there was little or no Da'wah party activity in Iraq, and the party became internationalized. It also endured factionalism and schisms, some over leadership and organization. One of these created an offshoot, Da'wah Tandhim al-Iraq, about which members are remarkably reticent, though this may reflect continued tensions between those with loyalties to the concept of the *wilayat al-faqih* and those without.

The result of these tribulations has been a party greatly weakend organizationally, compared with its competitors. Today Da'wah leadership is a composite, not only of its two wings (Da'wah and Da'wah Tandhim) but essentially of three exile groups: those who have been living in Iran, those from Syria and Lebanon, and those from England... Lacking an organized militia, they are at a disadvantage with their two Shi'a rivals, SCIRI and the Sadrists, both backed by armed units... Much of the party's history was spent as a clandestine, underground movement that had little contact with the West and rejected many of its principles.... While some Da'wah leaders have had ties with Iran and have lived there, these ties are not as strong as SCIRI's. Da'wah's main strength in the government lies in its current control of the prime ministry, the key political post.

The third force in the Shi'a spectrum is the most recent to emerge: the Sadrist movement. Although identified with Moqtada al-Sadr and the rapid growth of his militias in 2003 and 2004, the movement actually has its origins in the ideas and networks of his father, Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, who was the leading Shi'a opponent of the regime inside Iraq in the 1990s. In terms of sheer power and ability to mobilize support, it certainly outweighs Da'wah and successfully challenges SCIRI. While its leaders are not in the top rank of decision makers, it is now a force to be reckoned with on the street, in the UIA, and in the country... It had difficulty finding competent people with a reputable professional background to fill the seats, and those now in office have little experience even within a cabinet short on experience...

Also significant are the ideas the Sadrists bring to government. These are not yet clearly formed, and they have shifted somewhat over time as Sadr has gained more experience and moved further into the mainstream. He represents the radical, populist strain in the Shi'a movement. Though strongly opposed to the occupation, since the election of December 2005 he has been wary of taking on US forces directly, avoiding a repetition of his bruising military confrontations of April and August 2004. Sadr has also taken a strong position on Iraqi unity, opposing any decentralization and federalism that would divide Iraq, and has been a supporter of Arabs in the Kirkuk region. If his opponent, Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, leads a move for a federal region in the south, Sadr may well lead the forces for a more unified Iraq, especially in Baghdad, where his main strength lies.

The Kurdish Alliance (KA): The Kurdish Alliance is composed mainly of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), along with some individuals and parties representing the Turkman and Christian populations...

On Iraqi issues, the Kurdish Alliance has far more cohesion than the UIA. It has coalesced behind a Kurdish nationalist agenda designed to create a semi-independent state in the Kurdish north, under the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), and to promote the expansion of this government to Kurdish majority areas, such as Kirkuk....

Unanimity on other important issues also adds to the KA's cohesion, setting it apart from the rest of Iraq. One such issue is secularism, which is particularly strong within the PUK but is also espoused by the KDP...

On the constitution, the Kurds have focused almost entirely on the issue of federalism, defined to give them equal status with other federal units, and sufficient legal powers to make the KRG virtually independent under the umbrella of the Iraqi state...

Despite the unifying factors in the Kurdish Alliance, the two leaders, KDP's Mas'ud Barzani and PUK's Jalal Talabani, have their differences, many of them papered over in the interest of success in Baghdad. These differences, partly personal and partly ideological, run deep. Although they have been reduced in recent years, ambitions smolder beneath the surface and could flare up again under certain circumstances. The KDP is the "mother" Kurdish organization, devoted to Kurdish nationalism and greater autonomy from the central government since soon after World War II. It was led for years by the legendary warrior Mustapha Barzani, but as a tribal leader Barzani was always faced with opposition from younger, left-leaning intellectuals within the party. In 1975, after a disastrous defeat in a struggle with the central government, this element, led by Jalal Talabani, broke away from the KDP to form a new party, the PUK. The PUK leaders were more middle class, better educated, and ideologically oriented, even Marxist, in their outlook. They wanted a party that was not only Kurdish but also modern, secular, and leftist, and they broke with traditional tribal organization and values. But more important than these leanings was the rivalry to dominate and control a newly emerging Kurdish entity, particularly after the 1979 death of Mustapha Barzani and the succession of his son, Mas'ud, to the KDP leadership. In the mid-1990s the two parties fought a minor civil war in the north, in which some thousand Kurds were killed and seventy thousand displaced. The Kurdish area in the north was divided, with a PUK government and *peshmerga* (armed militia) in Sulaimaniyyah, and the KDP in Irbil and Dohuk. Although the parties have since reconciled and have a unified parliament and a functioning regional government, there are limits to this integration. Two separate spheres of influence still exist, one for the PUK and one for the KDP, with key ministries, such as those dealing with the *peshmerga,* still under separate party control.

The two parties also have differing perspectives on Kurdish relations with Baghdad. The PUK appears to be more comfortable remaining part of Iraq. Jalal Talibani's position as president of Iraq requires him to represent all Iraqis, not just the Kurds, and provides him with a platform, interests, and constituencies broader than Kurdistan. As a result, many in the PUK take the view that Kurdistan can gain greater benefits by remaining part of the country than by seceding. The KDP, by contrast, appears to be moving toward de facto independence. Mas'ud Barzani has come close to recognizing this officially, speaking of the Kurd's natural right to self-determination and to establish their own state...There are disagreements on socioeconomic policy as well. Competition for scarce resources has always been a bone of contention between the two parties, and helped fuel the civil war in the 1990s...

Within the Kurdish area, the Alliance faces other challenges, including those from outside political parties and movements. Among these are the Kurdish Islamic Union, the leading exponent of the growing Islamic trend in the north, and political parties representing ethnic and sectarian minorities—notably the Turkmen and the Christians.

Tawafuq (Iraqi Accord Front) and the Sunnis: Formed only in 2005 to represent the Arab Sunni community in the December 2005 election, it has a leadership new to political office, with little governing experience. Not surprisingly, it has little cohesion

thus far . . . Tawafuq is essentially composed of three separate political groups: the Iraqi Islamic Party, Ahl al-Iraq (People of Iraq), and the National Dialogue Council. While Tawafuq has a few known figures, such as Adnan Dulaimi, who heads both Tawafuq and the separate Ahl al-Iraq, the remaining members are a mix of individuals with varied views, not yet bound together by a clear agenda beyond that of opposing Arab Sunni exclusion from the political process . . .

The backbone of Tawafuq, and its strongest component, is the IIP [Iraqi Islamic Party], the only real political party in the group. Essentially an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, which spread to Iraq in the late 1950s, the IIP was officially established in 1960 when then prime minister Abd al-Karim Qasim permitted political parties to be established. IIP's ideology was similar to the Muslim Brotherhood, but in multiethnic, multisectarian Iraq, the IIP in its early years cooperated with the Shi'ah Da'wah party, established around the same time as an Islamic opposition front. During this period the IIP worked more as a movement than as a party, quietly recruiting people. In the 1980s, when Saddam Hussein cracked down on religion and religious parties, the IIP went underground, and a number of its members, including its leader, Muhsin Abd al-Hamid, were arrested and imprisoned. Others, such as Ayyad al-Samarra'i, an engineer and now second in the party's structure, went abroad. In 1991, when opposition to Saddam's regime came into the open abroad, the IIP went public, but it refused to work with the United States or Iran, instead cooperating with underground groups. In 2003 the IIP returned to Iraq and participated in the Iraqi Governing Council set up under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). The party also joined the second temporary government, set up under Ayyad Allawi in 2004, until the decision to attack Fallujah in November 2004, when it left the government. Fallujah was a turning point for many Sunnis, making them feel both more "Sunni" and more marginalized by the new government.

Meanwhile, the IIP changed leaders. Muhsin Abd al-Hamid, a Kurd and an older, less dynamic figure, was replaced by Tariq al-Hashimi, an Arab Sunni, a strong nationalist, and an articulate spokesman for Sunni views. With the backing of other groups, the IIP supported participation in the 2005 referendum on the constitution. It even went so far as to urge a yes vote on the constitution, a view not shared by its partners in Tawafuq, on the premise that a constitutional revision would take place in the future. Before its inclusion in Tawafuq, the IIP had taken a range of positions on numerous issues. For example, it was in favor of a unified Iraqi state, but one that was Islamic in identity. It was opposed to foreign occupation but willing to cooperate with the multinational presence in the short term. After the formation of Tawafuq and under the impetus of growing Sunni extremism, it became more Sunni in orientation. The other two groups in Tawafuq are new and largely unformed, with little depth yet in candidates or ideological cohesion, beyond protecting the political relevance of the Sunni community . . .

Given the diverse backgrounds of Tawafuq's members, the issue that will give it the most trouble is that of identity. The alliance has strong nationalist tendencies, favoring a unified, even a highly centralized, Iraq, but the idea of citizenship in a diverse, nonsectarian Iraq is probably a minority view, confined to secularists. Many also want Iraq to have an Arab identity, a view that runs into problems with the Kurds. Others, particularly those in the IIP, see an Islamic identity as paramount . . . . Tawafuz is the moderate wing of the Sunni community, the sector that is willing to participate in government. The question is how much of the Sunni community it actually represents.

> **Iraqi National List (Iraqiyyah):** This group, representing a collection of individuals and parties once considered the moderate middle, is secular, non-sectarian, liberal and Iraqi in terms of identity and orientation. . . The poor showing of this centrist alliance may sound the death knell for a number of well-established Iraqi parties, some going back to the monarchy. Most important is Ayyad Allawi's own party, Wifaq (Iraq National Accord), a long-standing member of the outside opposition, which had worked with the US and the West to overthrow the Saddam regime. . . Although the party reached out to Arab Sunnis, the Sunnis generally turned against Allawi and his government after the attack on Falluja.
>
> Also joining the alliance was the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), founded in the 1930s, which had played a role in Iraq until it was finally driven underground by the Ba'ath in the early 1970s. But the ICP's appeal, both to intellectuals and to the working class, and its ability to attract supporters across ethnic and sectarian lines could not stand up to the onslaught of sectarian politics.[4]

This complex array of conflicting various leaders, factions, sectarian and ethnic parties, concerns, and motivations provided the backdrop for the lack of political progress and conciliation by Iraq's fourth government. Moreover, the USIP study showed that there were also deep divisions within each major political bloc.

Key Appointments: Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, and National Security Advisor

Al-Maliki's appointments to the Ministries of Defense, Interior, and National Security were approved by the Iraqi legislature and announced June 8, 2006, but the appointments were more political compromises than an effort to find the best leader. Like most of the cabinet, they were the result of an awkward effort to share power among Iraq's sectarian, ethnic, and political factions.

The new Defense Minister was Iraqi Army Gen. Abdul-Qader Mohammed Jassim al-Mifarji, a Sunni; the Interior Minister was Jawad al-Bolani, a Shi'ite; and the National Security Minister was Sherwan al-Waili, a Shi'ite.[5] The long-delayed agreement by Iraq's political factions on these contentious posts created at least a short-term optimism in Washington and Baghdad.

Al-Mifarji was not a member of any political party and when speaking to the parliament after his confirmation told of how he was removed from Saddam's military and sentenced to seven years in prison after he opposed the invasion of Kuwait. "As a defense minister I will work for all Iraqis and will not work according to my tribal, religious and ethnic background," al-Mifarji said.[6]

Al-Bolani, Minister of Interior, was born in Baghdad and had a career as an engineer in the Iraqi Air Force. He became involved in politics as a member of the United Iraqi Alliance in Nasiriyah in 2003 and then worked for the national government as the undersecretary for public works.[7]

The National Security Minister, al-Waili, had survived Saddam's crackdown of the Shi'ite uprising in the south that followed the Gulf War. He was head of the Basra

City Council and a member of the Iraqi Governing Council. He belonged to the Iraqi Da'wa Party (different from the Islamic Da'wa Party) and graduated with a law degree from Basra University. He said that his first orders of business under the new post would be to tackle the issues of border and regional security.[8]

The Ministries of Defense, Interior, Petroleum, and Finance all remained administrative nightmares that needed immediate leadership and organization. The Iraqi forces had to be given tighter control and more unity, and the new government faced major problems in terms of fiscal resources, cuts in the flow of foreign aid funding, and in securing and expanding oil exports.

The government also had to cope with appointing a new constitutional advisory group and with a legal requirement to meet a four-month deadline to clarify virtually every controversial issue in Iraqi politics and governance—including a vague provision on abolishing militias. Even if this went well, and the new assembly approved the new revisions to the constitution, the new government faced a 60-day period in which to campaign for a popular referendum to vote on the result—the fifth major shakeup in the Iraqi government in two years.

This meant that the same new government that now had the responsibility for shaping Iraqi security forces and winning a war had to wait before it could actually begin to govern with a full constitutional mandate and legal base—provided that it could hold the nation together, there was no division into federalism, and Iraqi society could rebuild some of the bridges across its recent sectarian and ethnic divisions.

The government also faced the certainty that the insurgency would continue to strike at every fault line in the interim. It had to restore civil order, deal with the militias, and make "year of the police" a reality that could create a truly national police.

In an op-ed that appeared in several major U.S. newspapers later in the same week, al-Maliki again attempted to lay out the three primary pillars of his strategy for Iraq. These included strengthening Iraq's security forces and either absorbing or disbanding militias, rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure, and beginning to heal ethnic and sectarian strife unleashed since the end of Saddam's rule through a campaign of "national reconciliation."[9]

As a result, completing the creation of a new government had little impact on either the insurgency or intensifying civil conflict. Even with the ministerial posts agreed upon, the government faced critical challenges it could do little to overcome. These included problems like independent militias, Kurdish autonomy, and oil revenues—that could prove equally contentious.

One secular politician, Ayad Jamal al-Din, warned that a new inclusive government would not be a panacea to the many problems facing Iraq. "I think that things will not calm down easily, even after the formation of a government, but in general there is progress in the political situation," he said. Still, he feared that with the results of the elections that sectarianism had been enshrined in Iraq's political landscape saying, "the democracy has become a democracy of sects."[10]

Al-Maliki's Program

On June 25, 2006, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki presented a 24-point "National Reconciliation and Dialogue Project" to the Iraqi Council of Representatives as part of his efforts to stem sectarian and ethnic violence in the country. The document was a product of rounds of debate and discussion within the Iraqi government, as well as talks involving Iraqi President Jalal al-Talabani, U.S. ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad, and seven Sunni insurgent groups—aimed to draw insurgent elements of the armed opposition into the political process.[11] On the day of its release, Mr. Maliki announced in parliament, "[F]or he who wants to build, we offer a hand with an olive branch."[12]

A number of points were included to win Sunni support, including the amnesty provision, a review of laws banning high-ranking members of the former ruling Ba'ath Party from public posts, and a proposal to negotiate rules of engagement with American forces to prevent human rights violations during military operations.[13]

At the same time, the document quickly drew criticism for its failure to address a number of key and divisive issues. Most notably, the document was ambiguous in specifying which insurgents would be granted amnesty, omitted mention of a timeline for the withdrawal of Coalition forces from Iraq, and failed to lay out how the Iraqi government would deal with militias.

The rewording of the amnesty provision in the final document reflected a compromise between competing interests in the national unity government, as well as pressure from Washington. During negotiations, religious Shi'ites opposed amnesty for Sunni insurgents, and while the U.S. government supported efforts to co-opt insurgents into the political process, lawmakers were quick to lobby against amnesty for those who took part in the killing of American soldiers.

Article 5 broadly stated that prisoners who were not "involved in crimes, terrorist activities and war crimes against humanity"[14] would be eligible for amnesty, given that they renounced violence and supported the national unity government. But it remained unclear whether insurgents who killed Iraqi security forces or, more contentiously, those who killed American troops would be included in the amnesty plan. The original concept, indicated in earlier drafts of the document, was to provide a broad amnesty to detainees who were not involved in the "shedding of innocent Iraqis' blood."[15] The United States also raised questions over the plan's amnesty provisions. A couple of days after al-Maliki presented his National Reconciliation Plan, he publicly announced that insurgents who attacked American forces would not be pardoned under the new amnesty. When asked to identify which groups and individuals would be eligible, he cited Iraqis who had carried out "sabotage" against the government, though only "minor" acts, as well as those who had joined the insurgency as an act of resistance against the American-led process, but had not killed anyone. He said it would also apply to members of the Ba'ath Party of Saddam Hussein who renounced their allegiance.[16]

The National Reconciliation Plan was also criticized for glossing over the issue of Coalition troop withdrawal. While it called for the strengthening of Iraqi security

forces to take over the role of Coalition troops, there was no mention of developing a concrete timetable for the withdrawal of foreign forces—a provision that was included in an earlier draft of the initiative, but subsequently omitted. The plan also included a lofty proposal to "solve the problem of militias," without clearly detailing what this meant or how it could be achieved.[17]

More broadly, the debates in developing the reconciliation plan revealed a struggle within the new Iraqi government in trying to achieve two contradictory aims: coaxing insurgents into a participatory role in the political process, while simultaneously trying to project resolve in its crackdown on violent groups and establishing distance from armed factions. On the day al-Maliki launched the plan, he called on insurgents to "lay down their arms and join the democratic process," but earlier stressed that "reconciliation and national dialogue does not mean honoring and reaching out to the killers and criminals."[18] The severity of the challenge the Iraqi administration faced in balancing these two principles was exacerbated by the embedded affiliation of government groups with militias.

The end result was that the conciliation effort had little impact on the growing level of violence. Reactions from the Sunni community to the National Reconciliation Plan were mixed. Some elder Sunni politicians, such as Adnan al-Dulaimi, as well as the Sunni Endowment, endorsed the plan, whereas the Mujaheddin al-Shura Council announced in an online statement that "there will be no reconciliation with the apostates, nor will our swords be put in their sheaths."[19]

A member of the Islamic Army of Iraq said that violent attacks would continue so long as American troops were in Iraq. Adnan Thiyab al-Jubouri, a Sunni member of parliament, commented on the difficulty in bringing insurgents to the negotiating table: "We worked hard trying to make one of the resistance groups accept the reconciliation project but we failed. We've been in direct contact with most of them, except al-Qa'ida. They said it is impossible for the Iraqi armed resistance to stop. They insist that this is their right to get rid of the occupation."[20]

The Fourth Government's Negotiations with "Nationalist" Insurgents

In spite of the controversy surrounding the reconciliation plan, there were some encouraging developments. When the initiative was introduced, several Sunni-led insurgent groups approached top Iraqi government officials to begin negotiations.[21] And symbolically, the plan represented al-Maliki's commitment to the new constitution and his political will and determination to embrace national unity, engage in negotiations with armed groups, and to offer amnesty.

Sunni cleric Ahmed Abdul Ghafour al-Samarrai offered the support of the Sunni Endowment, the government agency responsible for Sunni religious affairs. He called, however, on the government to move quickly to address gaps in the plan, including the disbanding of militias and the release of all prisoners who had not been convicted. "We bless the initiative," but al-Samaraie added, "We think that the first step to be taken regarding this plan is to disband armed militias because the

government will not be able to impose the law on everybody with the presence of those militiamen that consider themselves above the law."[22]

Four days after the prime minister presented the initiative, 11 Sunni insurgent groups offered to immediately halt attacks on American-led forces in Iraq if Washington and the Iraqi government agreed to withdraw all Coalition forces from the country within two years. Eight of the 11 insurgent groups that approached al-Maliki's government came under the umbrella group of the 1920 Revolution Brigade. The Islamic Army in Iraq, the Mohammed Army, and the Mujahedin Shura Council were not part of the offer to the government.

Although Prime Minister al-Maliki did not dismiss the proposal, he said in televised remarks that the timetable demand was unrealistic since it was not certain whether Iraqi forces would be prepared within that time frame to deem a foreign presence unnecessary.[23] And while this particular arrangement never materialized, in the following weeks, 22 Arab Sunni groups agreed to join al-Maliki's initiative of national dialogue.[24] In addition, a group of 18 senior officers of the former Ba'athist regime met with President Jalal Talabani to discuss ways of integrating hundreds of Arab Sunni cashiered officers and noncommissioned officers into the Iraqi forces.[25]

Growing Divides: Segregating the Country

For all the talk of conciliation, sectarian violence was now carving Baghdad into Sunni and Shi'ite zones, protected by various armed groups. Increasingly, analysts were describing violence in the capital as part of a sectarian struggle for territorial gains to control Baghdad, and Iraq as a whole.

The Sunni strongholds in Baghdad included Ghazaliya and Ameriya in the west of the city, Karkh on the western bank of the river, and Adhamiya on the eastern bank of the river. The prominent Shi'ite stronghold of Sadr City lay to the east. Khadamiya and Shuala were predominantly Shi'ite areas in the northwest. Flashpoint areas included the southern suburb of Dora, the Jihad district in the west, Sayediya and Ameriya in the southwest, and along the border between Shuala and Ghazaliya.[26]

Some leaders of Iraq's Shi'ite bloc openly began to promote a plan to partition the entire country along sectarian lines to curb violence. They advocated the creation of federal regions—similar to the Kurds' enclave in the north—that would have independent defense forces and autonomous control over oil resources in their territory. SCIRI leader Abdel Aziz al-Hakim advanced a proposal that would create a nine-province district in the south, a largely peaceful area that holds 60 percent of the country's oil reserves. Cabinet ministers, clerics, and ministers promulgated the plan.[27]

According to the Iraqi constitution, any of Iraq's 18 provinces, or a group of provinces, could hold a referendum on the formation of a "federal" region. However, the constitution left the definition of federalism vague, without specifying the conditions of such autonomy. The question of control over oil exploration was also skirted in the constitution. According to the provision's ambiguous wording, the federal

government was allowed to administer "current" fields, provided that the revenues were divided in "a fair manner" among the regions.[28] On August 7, Iraq's Kurdish autonomous region published a draft version of a law that would grant itself the right to control the petroleum operation in its own region, in addition to the province of Kirkuk.[29]

Many Sunni leaders criticized the new push by key leaders within the Shi'ite bloc to "federate" the country, arguing that these new calls were driven by Shi'ite ambitions to consolidate power, and to control oil reserves. Adnan Dulami, a leading Sunni Arab politician, said, "controlling these areas will create a grand fortune that they can exploit. Their motive is that they are thirsty for control and power."[30]

Most analysts agreed that the process of segregating Iraq into geographical regions would be a massive logistical and political undertaking and would pose significant challenges. Since Iraq did not divide neatly along ethnic lines, any effort to segregate the country involved large-scale relocations and would likely lead to greater occurrences of "ethnic cleansing."

A number of areas, including Baghdad, Diyala, northern Babil, and southern Salahaddin, were truly mixed areas comprised of a patchwork of Sunni and Shi'ite villages. Kirkuk, like Baghdad, was a deeply divided city. Other areas such as Basra and Mosul had significant minority populations. Determining how to divide and organize the security forces and addressing oil fields, facilities, exploration, and revenue rights posed further complications to any proposal to divide the country.

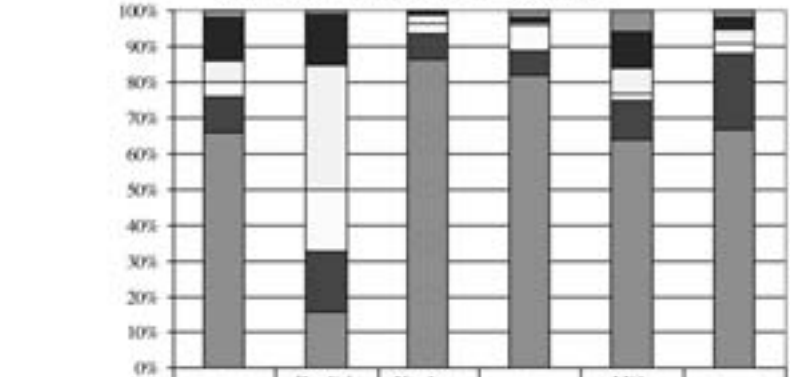
It was also unclear that there was widespread public support for any such proposal. A poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) from June 14–24, 2006, indicated that the majority of Iraqis disagreed with calls for the segregation of their country along religious or ethnic lines.[31] Sixty-eight percent of respondents strongly disagreed with the notion of portioning the country, 12 percent disagreed, 5 percent agreed, 8 percent strongly agreed, and 9 percent did not know or did not respond. The regional breakdown of the responses is depicted in Figure 9.1. All regions, with the exception of the Kurdish areas, expressed reluctance to divide Iraq.

While the data lent support to the claim that Iraqis generally wanted the country to stay together, the results of the survey, like all polling data, had to be interpreted cautiously.

- First, the polling was conducted prior to the marked escalation in sectarian and ethnic violence in July. Iraqis may warm to the proposal of dividing Iraq if the threat of full-scale civil becomes more acute.
- Second, while Iraqis might broadly agree to the notion of a united country, they are likely to express sharp differences on a fundamental issue—how power should be distributed among the various factions in the country. A more robust analysis of the prospects for national unity would need to address underlying fault lines concerning the balance of power.

The growing fragmentation in Iraq served as a pressing warning that the al-Maliki government had to act far more quickly and decisively and that Iraq's various factions

Some people are calling for the segregation of Iraqis according to religious or ethnic sect. Do you agree or disagree with this suggestion?



	Baghdad	Kurdish Area	Northern Arab	Sunni Areas	Mid-Euphrates	South
NA	2%	1%		2%	6%	2%
DK	12%	14%	1%	1%	10%	3%
Strongly Agree	6%	35%	2%	1%	7%	4%
Agree	4%	17%	2%	7%	2%	3%
Disagree	10%	17%	6%	7%	11%	21%
Strongly Disagree	66%	16%	69%	82%	64%	67%

Source: International Republican Institute, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," June 14-24, 2006.

Figure 9.1 Separating Iraq along Sectarian Lines—Regional Breakdown, June 2006

did not have time to bargain by attrition to prevent the country from slipping into civil war or dividing along sectarian lines. And the United States had to be prepared to rush in if it would help move political comprises forward—but the growing resilience to U.S. efforts in Iraq was writing on the wall that the odds of success seemed to be deteriorating for months.

Iraqi Attitudes toward the New Government and Deteriorating Economic Conditions

Deteriorating economic conditions in Iraq also contributed to the failure of U.S. and Iraqi forces to provide security in the summer of 2006. The Iraqi Minister of Planning released the results from a survey completed from June 23, 2006, through July 23, 2006. The results of the survey showed that on average, Iraqis spent 40 percent of their income on fuel, transportation, and electricity. The minister pointed out that from 1988 to 1992, Iraqis paid only 5 percent of their income for those items. Furthermore, 99 percent of families went to the black market for propane, 98 percent of families used the black market for kerosene, 84 percent of families went to the black market for diesel, and 62 percent used the black market for gasoline.[32]

Iraq's economy was now at its weakest point since the invasion. Some sources showed unemployment as high as 60 percent, although the Central Intelligence Agency had reported it at 30 percent in 2005. This was also a national average and ignored the added impact of underemployment. Conditions were far worse in conflict areas. Since 2003, the prices of food and basic goods at least doubled. Economic hardship began to take a toll on Iraqis, who worried about providing sufficient food for their families. Furthermore, many Iraqis turned down jobs in particularly volatile areas because they feared for their safety. Ongoing sectarian strife continued to drive up prices, making life for the average Iraqi close to unbearable. Economic despair, fear of the security crisis, and impatience drove many Iraqis to join sectarian militias, which only propagated the economic decline.[33]

The IRI conducted a countrywide survey between June 14 and June 24, 2006, polling around 3,000 Iraqis on political, economic and security issues, and living conditions.[34] Several public opinion polls were also included in the August 2006 Pentagon Report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq." The surveys were predominantly carried out by the Department of State Office of Research over June and July.

Both sets of data—those compiled by the IRI and the Department of State—were prone to a series of inaccuracies inherit in public opinion polling, were questionable because of inhospitable security conditions in Iraq, particularly in areas like Mosul, Anbar, and Baghdad, and tended to produce much more favorable results for the Coalition and the Iraqi government than independent polls. Moreover, these polls often lacked an adequate explanation of methodology—such as whether controlled questions were used—making it difficult to ascertain the validity of the sample, and establish the true margin of error, a problem that was especially apparent in the Quarterly Report figures.

These sets of polling data were gathered prior to the July peak in violence, and after Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki announced the new security crackdown for Iraq—factors that skewed the data toward a relatively more optimistic outlook. The surveys were also conducted shortly after the full creation of the Iraqi national unity government and, consequently, reflected a time when Shi'ites and Kurds largely considered themselves "winners" of the political process. Nevertheless, the results are still of interest.

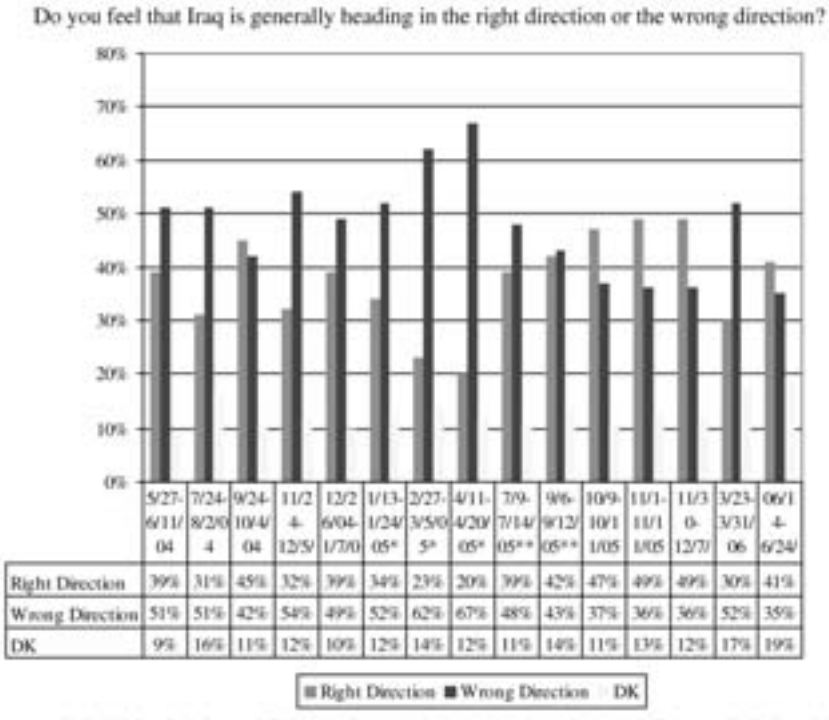
- As indicated in Figure 9.2, most Iraqis now felt that the country was "heading in the right direction," by a 41 to 35 percent margin—reflecting a reversal from an earlier poll conducted in late March, in which 52 percent of those polled indicated that the country was going in the wrong direction, compared to 30 percent who said it was heading in the right direction. See also Figure 9.3.
- A regional breakdown for the polling data showed a strong divergence in opinion in the northern Arab and Sunni Arab areas, where the majority indicated that the country was headed in the wrong direction. The following breakdown of reasons was cited when respondents were asked why the country was heading in the right or wrong direction:[35]

Figure 9.2 Overall Direction of the Country

Right Direction		Wrong Direction	
Elected national government	31%	Bad security situation	34%
Freedom and democracy	21%	Presence of occupation	32%
Getting rid of former regime	13%	Sectarian conflict	32%
Elections	12%	Inactive government	7%
Having a constitution	7%	General instability	6%

Source: International Republican Institute, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," June 14–24, 2006.

According to IRI polling, 25 percent of Iraqis expressed that they were very confident in the new Iraqi government, 33 percent were somewhat confident, and compared to 7 percent who were somewhat unconfident and 29 percent who were not confident. But the regional breakdown, illustrated in Figure 9.4, showed that the overwhelming majority (78 percent) of respondents in the northern Arab areas deeply lacked confidence in the government, and 52 percent of the respondents in Sunni areas were either very or somewhat unconfident in the government. When respondents were



	5/27-6/11/04	7/24-8/2/04	9/24-10/4/04	11/24-12/5/	12/2-6/04-1/7/0	1/13-1/24/05*	2/27-3/5/05*	4/11-4/20/05*	7/9-7/14/05**	9/6-9/12/05**	10/9-10/11/05	11/1-11/1/05	11/30-12/7/	3/23-3/31/06	06/14-6/24/
Right Direction	39%	31%	45%	32%	39%	34%	23%	20%	39%	42%	47%	49%	49%	30%	41%
Wrong Direction	51%	51%	42%	54%	49%	52%	62%	67%	48%	43%	37%	36%	36%	52%	35%
DK	9%	16%	11%	12%	10%	12%	14%	12%	11%	14%	11%	13%	12%	17%	19%

*Does not include Mosul, Anbar and Dohuk/ **Does not include Mosul and Dohuk/ ***Does not include Anbar
Source: International Republican Institute, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," June 14-24, 2006.

Figure 9.3 Overall Direction of the Country: May 2004–June 2006

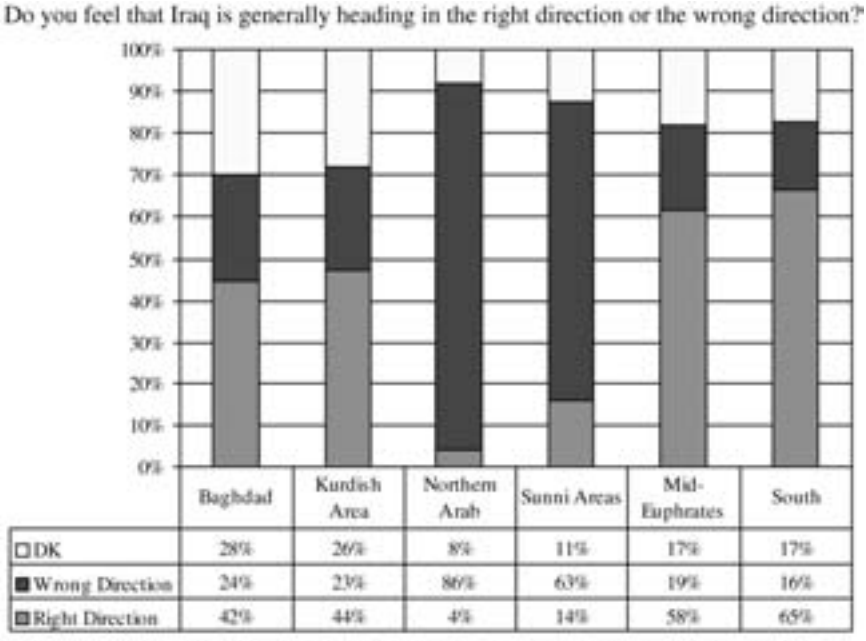
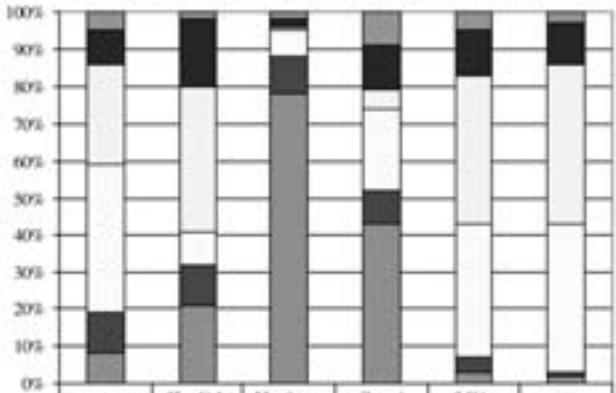


Figure 9.4 Overall Direction of the Country—Regional Breakdown: June 2006

asked which issues should be given highest priority by the new Iraqi government, security, infrastructure, and economic development/job creation ranked as the top three areas.[36]

- The August 2006 Pentagon Report to Congress on Iraq included a similar poll, assessing public confidence in the government to improve the situation in Iraq, as depicted in Figure 9.5.
- The Department of State Office of Research conducted its survey shortly after the IRI polling period, shown in Figure 9.6. While the data indicated that the majority of Iraqis had faith in the new government, confidence levels were notably lowest in mixed and predominantly Sunni areas, such as Kirkuk and Tikrit/Baquba.
- IRI polling found that 59 percent of respondents said that the overall economic conditions in Iraq were poor, 26 percent said that they were fair, and one percent indicated that they were good or excellent (see Figure 9.7). When Iraqis were asked about their personal economic conditions, the distribution was fairly similar. Forty-nine percent said that the conditions were poor, 34 percent indicated that conditions were fair, 15 percent that they were good, and 1 percent that they were excellent.
- As depicted in Figure 9.8, the regional breakdown of personal economic conditions showed noticeable variations across different areas in Iraq. Fifty-four percent of respondents described "good" personal economic conditions in Kurdish areas, whereas 82 percent and 67 percent described their situations as "poor" in Northern Arab and Sunni areas, respectively.

What level of overall confidence do you have in the government announced by Nouri Al-Maliki?



	Baghdad	Kurdish Area	Northern Arab	Sunni Areas	Mid-Euphrates	South
NA	5%	2%	2%	9%	5%	3%
DK	9%	18%	2%	12%	12%	11%
Very Confident	27%	39%	1%	5%	40%	43%
Somewhat Confident	40%	9%	7%	22%	36%	40%
Somewhat Unconfident	11%	11%	10%	9%	4%	1%
Very Unconfident	8%	21%	78%	43%	3%	2%

Source: International Republican Institute, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," June 14-24, 2006.

Figure 9.5 Confidence in the Government—Regional Breakdown, IRI Reporting: June 2006

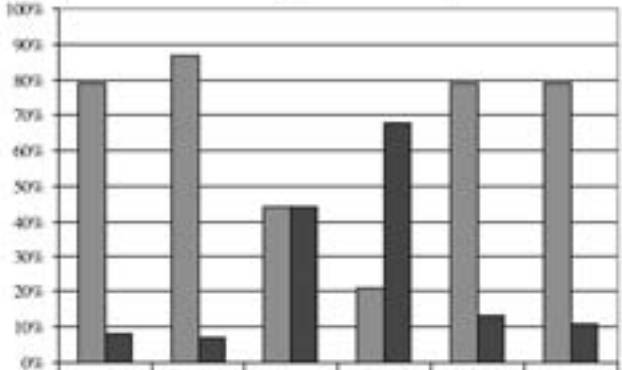
- A poll conducted by the State Department Office of Research in June 2005, and repeated in July 2006, compared Iraqi responses to whether they felt that their household financial situation had improved from prewar conditions. The results, recreated as Figure 9.9, showed variation across regions, but Iraqi assessments were broadly more pessimistic in July 2006 than the previous reporting period.

HEIGHTENED SECTARIAN AND ETHNIC VIOLENCE

The Department of Defense (DoD) still refused to use the term civil war, but it did make significant changes in its assessment of the violence in Iraq in its May 26, 2006, report to Congress. While many aspects of the report continued to understate the level of civil violence, the overview of the threats to Iraqi stability now covered far more of the overall mix of conflict than the DoD's initial emphasis on terrorism, former regime loyalists, and the Sunni Arab part of the insurgency:[37]

- *Sunni and Shi'a Rejectionists* who use violence or coercion in an attempt to rid Iraq of Coalition forces. . .subvert emerging institutions and infiltrate and co-opt security and political organizations. Beyond this shared goal, Rejectionist groups diverge regarding long-term objectives. Rejectionists continue to employ a dual-track strategy in Iraq,

How much confidence do you have in the new Iraqi government to improve the situation in Iraq?



	Baghdad	Kurdish Areas	Kirkuk	Tikrit/ Baquba	Mid-Euphrates	South
Great deal/fair amount	79%	87%	44%	21%	79%	79%
Not much/not at all	8%	7%	44%	68%	13%	11%

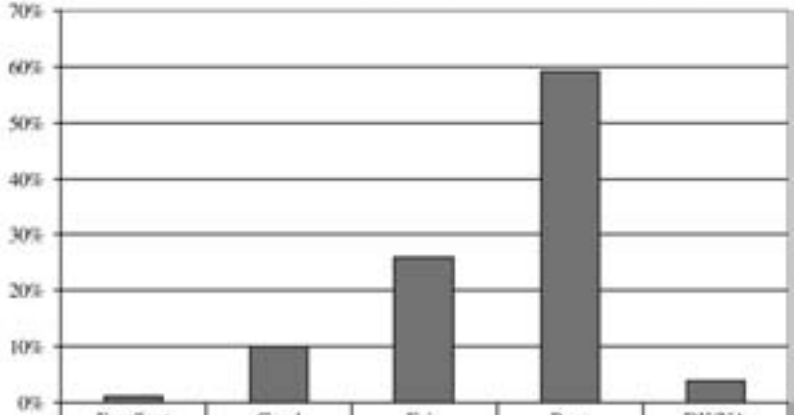
Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq." Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p. 7.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.

Department of State, Office of Research, June 21-July 6, 2006.
Sample sizes: Baghdad-173; Kurdish Areas-308; Kirkuk-108; Tikrit/Baquba-210; Mid-Euphrates-523; South-437
Margin of error: ±4 percent for the overall sample, but varies among regions.
Note: Data from Mosul is not included in this chart. It was determined to be unreliable.

Figure 9.6 Confidence in the Government—Regional Breakdown, Department of State Reporting: June 2006

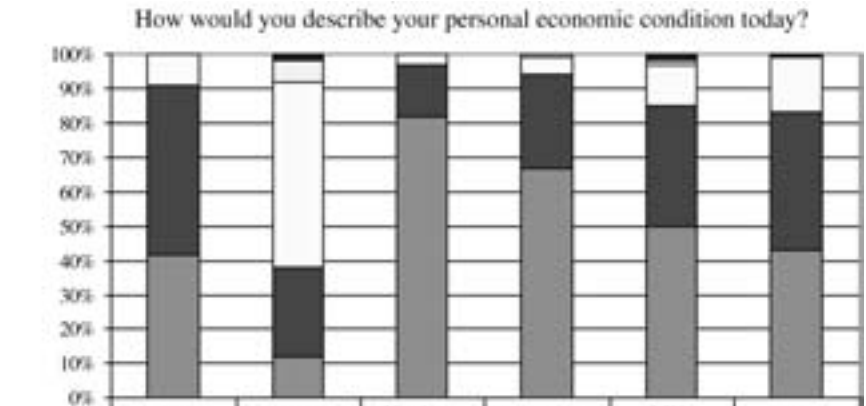
How would you rate economic conditions in Iraq today?



	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	DK/NA
Percentage	1%	10%	26%	59%	4%

Source: International Republican Institute, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," June 14-24, 2006.

Figure 9.7 Overall Economic Conditions in Iraq: June 2006



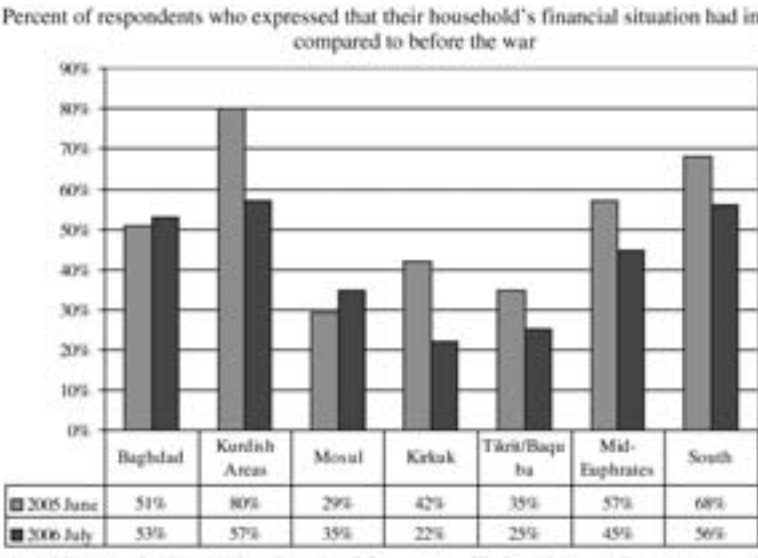
	Baghdad	Kurdish Area	Northern Arab	Sunni Areas	Mid-Euphrates	South
DK	0%	2%	0%	0%	2%	1%
Excellent	0%	6%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Good	9%	54%	3%	5%	12%	16%
Fair	49%	26%	15%	27%	35%	40%
Poor	42%	12%	82%	67%	50%	43%

Source: International Republican Institute, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," June 14-24, 2006.

Figure 9.8 Personal Economic Conditions—Regional Breakdown: June 2006

attempting to leverage the political process to address their core concerns. Since the Samarra bombing, sectarian Rejectionist groups, including militant Shi'a militias, have increased attacks against rival sectarian groups and populations. Both Sunni and Shi'a Rejectionists have conducted reprisal ethno-sectarian attacks.

- *Former Regime Loyalists*. Saddam loyalists are no longer considered a significant threat to the MNF-I [Multi-National Force-Iraq] end state and the Iraqi government. However, former regime members remain an important element involved in sustaining and enabling the violence in Iraq, using their former internal and external networks and military and intelligence expertise involving weapons and tactics. Saddamists are no longer relevant as a cohesive threat, having mostly splintered into Rejectionists or terrorist and foreign fighters.
- *Terrorists and Foreign Fighters*. Terrorists and foreign fighters, although far fewer in number than the Rejectionists or former regime loyalists, conduct most of the high profile, high-casualty attacks and kidnappings. Many foreign fighters continue to arrive in Iraq via Syria . . . Al Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) is currently the dominant terrorist group in Iraq. They continue efforts to spark a self-sustaining cycle of ethno-sectarian violence in Iraq . . . AQI pursues four broad lines of operation: anti-MNF-I, antigovernment, anti-Shi'a, and external operations. Ansar al Sunna (AS) is another significant, mostly indigenous, terrorist group that shares some goals with AQI. Because of similar agendas, AQI and AS tend to cooperate on the tactical and operational levels. Most recently, there have been indications of cooperation between AQI and Rejectionists as well. It is estimated that 90 percent of suicide attacks are carried out by AQI . . . The current



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p. 18.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.

Department of State, Office of Research, June 2005/July 2006.
Sample sizes: June 2005: Baghdad-216; Kurdish Areas-344; Mosul 127; Kirkuk-115; Tikrit/Baquba-224; Mid-Euphrates-527; South-435.
July 2006: Baghdad-173; Kurdish Areas-308; Mosul-111; Kirkuk-108; Tikrit/Baquba-210; Mid-Euphrates-525; South-437.
Margin of error: ±4 percent for the overall sample, but varies among regions.

Figure 9.9 Household Financial Situation: June/July 2006

positive effects of intolerance for al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) among Sunni Arabs may be limited if Sunnis perceive a lack of progress in reconciliation and government participation or if increased sectarian violence draws various Sunni insurgency elements closer.

- *Militia Groups*. Militia groups help both maintain and undermine security in Iraq, as well as contribute to achieving the goals of their affiliated political parties. In many cases, these militias, whether authorized or not, provide protection for people and religious sites where the Iraqi police are perceived to be unable to provide adequate support. Sometimes they work with the Iraqi police. In some cases, they operate as a power base for militia leaders trying to advance their own agendas. Militia leaders influence the political process through intimidation and hope to gain influence with the Iraqi people through politically based social welfare programs. Militias often act extra-judicially via executions and political assassinations—primarily perpetrated by large, well-organized Shi'a militia groups and some small Sunni elements. Militias are also sometimes engaged in purely criminal activity, including extortion and kidnapping. . . Polling data indicate that most Iraqis agree that militias make Iraq a more dangerous place and should be disbanded. . . The most prominent militia groups are the Badr Organization—essentially the paramilitary wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, but technically its own political party now—and Shi'a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). The Kurdish Peshmerga is technically an

"authorized armed force," rather than a militia. Shi'a militias have been involved in sectarian violence. Tactics employed by such militias have varied, including death squads, Sharia courts, and campaigns of intimidation. Shi'a militias, including the Badr Organization and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), have been accused of committing abuses against Sunni civilians, exacerbating sectarian tensions. In addition, JAM is implicated in much of the unrest that followed the February 22 Samarra mosque bombing. The Shi'a militias receive arms and other support from Iran, reinforcing Sunni fears of Iranian domination and further elevating ethno-sectarian violence.

Each such threat was compounded by sectarian and ethnic divisions within the government of Iraqi forces, which sometimes aided the Sunni insurgents and more often aided violent Shi'ite and Kurdish groups. Endemic corruption in the government, and crime throughout civil society, added a further mix of threats.

Although the Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report for February 2006 had emphasized that the Zarqawi-declared "war" against Shi'ites was "the final wedge that split the bond between al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and the Sunni rejectionists," the May 2006 report warned that the "current positive effects of intolerance for al-Qa'ida in Iraq among Sunni Arabs may be limited if Sunnis perceive a lack of progress in reconciliation and government participation of if increased sectarian violence draws various Sunni insurgency elements closer."[38]

The report noted that despite the blurred lines among insurgents, terrorists, and criminals, Sunni Arab insurgents remained the most organized and cohesive group and that terrorists and foreign fighters, even with low numbers, constituted the most serious and immediate threat to Iraq.[39]

It also stated, however, that "militia groups help both maintain and undermine security in Iraq," it identified such militias, and the sectarian divide in general, as "an important challenge that has emerged in the recent period, in part because of the political vacuum caused by the delay in forming a new government."[40] Likewise, it acknowledged that militias had been involved in abductions and assassinations and that the loyalties of militia members incorporated in the security forces "probably still lie, to some extent, with their ethno-sectarian leaders."[41] It warned that violence by these militias, combined with the absence of effective security forces in many parts of Iraq, has caused many Sunni areas to form informal militias in order to provide for their own safety.[42]

The month of July introduced a new wave of sectarian violence—largely characterized by tit-for-tat reprisals led by Sunni groups and Shi'ite militias, which increasingly appeared to be dictating the flux of violence in Iraq. In an address at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad warned that sectarian violence had overshadowed the threat posed by the Sunni insurgency as the main obstacle to achieving stability in Iraq. "A year ago, terrorism and the insurgency against the coalition and the Iraqi security forces were the principal sources of instability," he said. "Violent sectarianism is now the main challenge. . .It is imperative for the new Iraqi government to make major progress in dealing with this challenge in the next six months."[43]

By the summer of 2006, the primary threat to Iraqi security had clearly evolved from "terrorism" to "insurgency" to "ethnic and sectarian violence" whose cumulative impact was now civil war. In an expanded section on the security environment, the August 2006 Quarterly Report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," now addressed the shifts in the nature of the violence in more realistic terms:

> Rising sectarian strife defines the emerging nature of violence in mid-2006. Since the last report, the core conflict in Iraq changed into a struggle between Sunni and Shi'a extremists seeking to control key areas in Baghdad, create or protect sectarian enclaves, divert economic resources, and impose their own respective and religious agendas. Death squads and terrorists are locked in mutually reinforcing cycles of sectarian strife, with Sunni and Shi'a extremists each portraying themselves as the defenders of their respective sectarian groups. However, the Sunni Arab insurgency remains potent and viable, although its visibility has been overshadowed by the increase in sectarian violence.[44]

Al-Maliki was cautious in describing this growing drift toward more intense civil conflicts. He still sought the implementation of a security crackdown in Baghdad and the introduction of the National Reconciliation Plan in June. At a July 10 press conference though, he said, "I don't see the country falling into a civil war, despite the regrettable activities of certain people who ignore that Iraq is united."[45]

Other assessments of the situation were grimmer. More Iraqi politicians, as well as some U.S. officials, were speaking of the beginning of a civil war, or questioning the capability of the nascent government to hold the country together. Wafiq al-Samarrae, an adviser to Iraqi President Talabani said on Al-Jazeera on July 10, "We've said it several times that there are people who want to create civil war. Today this country is on the verge of civil war, not sectarian strife."[46] A Shi'ite legislator, Haidar al-Ibadi, echoed this observation, "Certainly, what is happening is the start of civil war. It is a dangerous situation in which the people involved now are being dragged into massive killings."[47]

The cycle of reprisal killings weakened the credibility of al-Maliki's government and widened the political fault lines in an already-fragile government. A leading Sunni legislator, Saleh al-Mutlaq, said, "This is a hopeless government. It has not done one good thing since it started, and things are getting worse, not better... The parliament cannot reach practical solutions because their minds are concerned only with their sect and not the interests of the nation. It looks like the government is going to collapse very soon."[48]

In late July, Rida Jawad al-Takki, a senior member of parliament from the Shi'ite Alliance Bloc said, "The situation is terrifying and black...We have received information of a plan to divide Baghdad. The government is incapable of solving the situation."[49]

According to an article in the *Miami Herald,* some U.S. officials acknowledged privately "that their hopes that Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki will be able to rein in Shi'ite militia groups and persuade Sunni insurgents to negotiate may be

misplaced. Many of the government's leaders were themselves linked to Shi'ite or Kurdish militias or guerrilla groups."[50]

Gen. John P. Abizad told a Senate Committee on August 3, "I believe that the sectarian violence is probably as bad as I've seen it, in Baghdad in particular, and that if not stopped, it is possible that Iraq could move towards civil war"—a statement that represented perhaps the most sober official military assessment since the commencement of the war.[51]

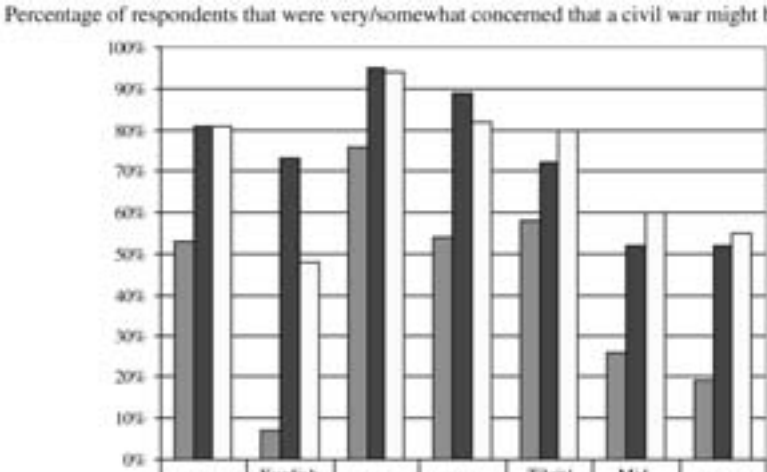
The situation grew worse in the late summer. This led Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most prominent Shi'ite religious authority in the country, to issue a statement saying that the time had come for "all those who value the unity and future of this country" to "exert maximum efforts to stop the bloodletting." He called on "all Iraqis of different sects and ethnic groups to be aware of the danger threatening the future of the country and stand side-by-side against it."[52]

The August 2006 DoD Quarterly Report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," noted the risk of rising sectarian tensions "manifested in an increasing number of execution style killings, kidnappings, and attacks on civilians, and increasing numbers of internally displaced persons."[53] While the report stated that the "conditions that could lead to civil war exist in Iraq," it maintained that "the current violence is not a civil war, and movement toward civil war can be prevented."[54] Figure 9.10 shows the concern over civil war by area since November 2005. Iraqis in Baghdad were just as concerned about the outbreak of civil war as they had been in March 2006, but Iraqis in southern Iraq were more concerned and the Kurds were less concerned.

Deadly Reprisal Attacks

Increasingly, attacks involved large-scale revenge killings, targeting of holy sites, and inflammatory exchanges of blame between Sunni and Shi'ite factions. Four of the bloodiest attacks of the year took place in July 2006, killing a total of 220.[55] In the first 18 days of July, sectarian or insurgent-related violence claimed the lives of at least 695 Iraqis and wounded 1,029.[56] These numbers represented a sharp increase over figures reported during the same period in 2005, when an Associated Press count showed that at least 450 Iraqis were killed.[57]

The cycle of violence in July began with the bombing of a small Shi'ite mosque in the Jihad neighborhood of southwest Baghdad on July 8. The following morning, in what was widely interpreted as a reprisal attack, Shi'ite militiamen rampaged through the Sunni neighborhood of Jihad in Baghdad, indiscriminately executing those identified as Sunnis. According to witness accounts, the gunmen set up checkpoints along main commercial streets and demanded identification cards, forced Sunnis out of their homes, and executed them in broad daylight. The death toll from the shootings varied; while the American military reported fewer than a dozen killed, some news agencies put the figure at over 50.[58] Only hours after the rampage, two car bombs exploded near a Shi'ite mosque in northern Baghdad, killing at least 17 and wounding 38 according to the Associated Press.[59]



	Baghdad	Kurdish Areas	Mosul	Kirkuk	Tikrit/ Baquba	Mid-Euphrates	South
2005 November	53%	7%	76%	54%	58%	26%	19%
2006 March	81%	73%	95%	89%	72%	52%	52%
2006 August	81%	48%	94%	82%	80%	60%	55%

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p. 35.
Data points are estimates from figure in the DoD document.
Department of State, Office of Research, November 2005/March 2006/August 2006.
Sample sizes: November 2005: Baghdad-1,365; Kurdish Areas-637; Mosul-521; Kirkuk-213; Tikrit/Baquba-597; Mid-Euphrates-1,017; South-910.
March 2006: Baghdad-213; Kurdish Areas-313; Mosul-123; Kirkuk 112; Tikrit/Baquba-211; Mid-Euphrates-550; South-448.
August 2006: Baghdad-911; Kurdish Areas-469; Mosul-371; Kirkuk-142; Tikrit/Baquba-361; Mid-Euphrates-678; South-684.
Margin of error: ±4 percent for the overall sample, but varies among regions.

Figure 9.10 Concern of Civil War: November 2005–August 2006

Several Sunni Arab political and religious leaders blamed Iraqi and American security forces for their failure to prevent the violence. Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister for Security Affairs, Salam al-Zobai, accused the Ministries of Defense and Interior of collaborating with the militias to carry out attacks. "Interior and Defense Ministries are infiltrated," he said. "And there are officials who lead brigades who are involved in this."[60]

Collaboration between security forces and the militias became one of the most sensitive and volatile issues in Iraq. The following witness account of the July 9 jihad killings was reported in the *Washington Post:*[61]

> Saleh Muhammed, an Amiriyah resident, told a Post special correspondent that he dialed 130 into his cell phone, Baghdad's emergency number. "The Mahdi Army has attacked Amiriyah," he told the Interior Ministry dispatcher.
>
> "The Mahdi Army are not terrorists like you," said the dispatcher at the ministry, which is controlled by a Shi'ite party and operates closely with militias. "They are people

doing their duty. And how could you know that they are the Mahdi Army? Is it written on their foreheads?" He hung up the phone.

Al-Maliki's office moved to distance itself from al-Zobai's statement, reporting that his comments "do not represent the government's point of view."[62] Some Jihadi residents and Sunni Arab leaders accused the Mahdi Army of committing the killings, but the organization denied the allegations. Some U.S. officials said that the Madhi Army, which once confined its activities to protecting the cleric's territory and trying to gain control of towns in southern Iraq, had become a criminal organization engaging in "homicides, kidnapping, and robberies in the Baghdad area."[63]

The country's largest Sunni bloc said that it would end its ten-day boycott of parliament in the interest of national unity following the attack. (The bloc had suspended its participation on July 2 after a colleague, Tayseer Najah al-Mashhadani, was kidnapped.)

On July 12, 2006, gunmen kidnapped a group of people at a parking lot of a bus station and killed 22 of them in execution-style slayings. All of the victims were Shi'ites. And five days later, masked gunmen carrying rocket launchers and grenades killed at least 42 people in a predominately Shi'ite market in Mahmoudiya. While the details of the attacks were not clear, several witnesses said that the violence began when Sunni gunmen opened fire on a funeral for a member of the Mahdi Army, killing nine mourners.[64]

The following day, at least 45 Iraqis were killed and 88 were injured in a suicide bombing near a Shi'ite shrine in the southern city of Kufa. The attacker drove a minivan to an area where Shi'ite laborers gather in search of work, offered them jobs, and loaded the minivan with volunteers before detonating the vehicle. In the wake of the attack, a Shi'ite television station broadcast inflammatory remarks by Shi'ites who blamed the attack on Sunni extremists and expressed frustration that Sunni politicians were unable to prevent the Sunni insurgent uprising. The main Sunni bloc condemned the Shi'ite-dominated security forces for failing to control the situation and argued that the attack likely came in retaliation for the kidnapping of seven Sunnis, whose bodies were discovered the day before in the town of Mahmoudiya.[65]

Human Rights Abuses

The July–August 2006 UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) report on human rights highlighted the fact that extremist groups now continually targeted ethnic and religious minorities as well as Arab Sunnis and Arab Shi'ites. For example, the Sabean-Mandean minority expressed fears that due to killings and migration, their thousands of years' presence in Iraq would cease. Tensions remained heightened in multi-ethnic Kirkuk, and the Turkoman population felt particularly victimized. The region of Kurdistan reported the arrival of many Christian groups from Baghdad, where they experienced attacks from various extremist militias. Additionally, in Mosul and the Ninewa plain, the Shabak minority cited continued subjection to violence and intimidation. The community reports that 100 were killed between

June and August 2006. All of the minorities feared political marginalization and worried about the lack of recognition of minorities in the Iraqi constitution.

The UNAMI report voiced concern over the conditions and legality of detention centers in Iraq. The Ministry of Human Rights in Iraq reported 35,542 detainees at the end of August 2006. The majority of the detainees were held by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and MNF-I. Several thousand detainees were "held outside the legal framework partly due to the fact that the Iraqi courts do not have the capacity to adjudicate such a high number of cases."

Detainees held by MNF-I, MOD, Ministry of Interior (MOI), and MOJ forces continued to be subject to torture during their interrogation. It was also clear that sectarian militias and death squads tortured their victims to find information about their sect. The majority of the bodies appearing at the morgues and on the streets showed signs of torture, such as electrocution, beating, burning, and broken bones. The UN's Chief Rapporteur on torture also said that torture may have been more widespread than it was during Saddam Hussein's regime.[66]

The surge in violence also exacerbated the internal displacement crisis in Iraq. According to the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, in only one week in July 1,117 families abandoned mixed areas for Shi'ite and Sunni strongholds. He said that nearly 27,000 families, or the equivalent of 162,000 people, had registered for relocation since the February 22 bombing of the Shi'ite shrine in Samarra and that this internal migration was "a dangerous sign" of religious segregation.[67]

AL-ZARQAWI'S DEATH: TEMPORARY "VICTORY" OR LASTING IMPACT?

The one major victory the Coalition and the Iraqi government did win during this period was the killing of al-Zarqawi. Official sources since reported that Coalition forces had been tracking key Zarqawi lieutenants for several weeks before his death, Jordanian intelligence provided important information, and sources inside al-Qa'ida provided additional information for a reward. U.S. military officials stated that the operation was the product of weeks of extensive intelligence gathering.[68]

Killing al-Zarqawi

On Wednesday, June 7, 2006, these efforts enabled U.S. commandos from Task Force 145 to surround the house when the ground commander called in the air strike. The call went to two F-16s on a routine patrol, one of which was in the process of aerial refueling, resulting in the lone fighter aircraft flying the mission and dropping both bombs.[69]

The F-16 dropped two 500-pound bombs on a suspected al-Zarqawi hideout in Hibhib, near Baquba in Diyala Province. Iraqi police were the first to arrive on the scene and pulled a man resembling al-Zarqawi from the wreckage; U.S. troops arrived shortly thereafter.[70] U.S. officials said that al-Zarqawi was identified by his fingerprints, tattoos, and scars, and later by DNA.[71] Al-Zarqawi survived, but died shortly after being put on a stretcher. In all, seven people were killed, including

al-Zarqawi's spiritual advisor, Sheik Abdel Rahman, whom it was believed that al-Zarqawi was visiting.[72]

A flood of contradictory reporting has added uncertain details and conjecture. Perhaps the only important question raised, beyond issues involving sensitive data, was why an air strike was conducted if U.S. Special Forces had the house surrounded and could possibly capture al-Zarqawi whose interrogation could have elicited valuable information. U.S. military spokesman Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell and later Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated that the compound was likely highly fortified and they did not want to put American lives at risk. In addition, al-Zarqawi had proven being adept at escaping U.S. forces before; thus the use of airpower would provide a greater assurance of a successful strike.[73]

Al-Zarqawi's death was accompanied by other successful Coalition and Iraqi strikes on al-Qa'ida. Some 17 raids were conducted the same day of the strike and 39 the following day based off of intelligence found at the site of the target. These searches found weapons, ammunition, "suicide" belts, passports, and Iraqi army uniforms.[74] They also resulted in the detention of 25 suspects and the seizure of documents, cell phones, and computers. There were reports that as many as five civilians were killed during these subsequent operations.[75] In the process, Coalition forces did find what Major General Caldwell described as a "treasure trove" of information. Mowaffak al-Rubaie, Iraq's National Security Advisor, said, "We believe this is the beginning of the end of al-Qa'ida in Iraq . . . We feel we know their locations, the names of their leaders, their whereabouts, their movements, through the documents we found during the last few days."[76]

Major General Caldwell announced that more than 450 raids were conducted on suspected militant hideouts in the week following al-Zarqawi's death—a third of which were carried out by Iraqi forces. He said they had led to the capture of 759 "anti-Iraq elements," the killing of 104 insurgents, and the discovery of 28 significant arms caches.[77] When one of the "top five" leaders of al Qa'ida in Iraq, Mansur al-Mashhadani, was killed in a Coalition air strike in Yusufiya on June 15, 2006, Caldwell commented that it would hinder the organization's ability to regenerate and reorganize itself.[78]

The Impact of Coalition Successes

The Iraqi government and U.S. forces in Iraq scored a major political and propaganda victory by killing Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, but any lasting impact from this victory depended on two things: (1) the overall resilience of the insurgency in Iraq and (2) how well the new Iraqi government could follow up with actions that would build a national consensus and defeat and undermine all the elements of the insurgency.

U.S. and Iraqi officials and some experts initially stated that the death of al-Zarqawi was at least a temporary "victory" for the Coalition and Iraq. U.S. President George W. Bush called al-Zarqawi's death "a severe blow to al-Qa'ida" and a "significant victory in the war on terror."[79] He warned, however, that violence would

continue in Iraq saying, "We have tough days ahead of us in Iraq that will require the continuing patience of the American people."[80] He added, "We can expect sectarian violence to continue."[81]

According to the numbers released by the central morgue the death toll escalated after the death of al-Zarqawi. On July 4, 2006, the central morgue announced that it received 1,595 bodies in June, which represented a 16-percent rise since May. Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, told the BBC the same day that "in terms of the level of violence [the death of al-Zarqawi], has not had any impact at this point."[82] According to information provided by the morgue deputy, the death toll for June 2006 was roughly double the 879 bodies received in June 2005.[83]

Some analysts warned that the end of al-Zarqawi might present the al-Qa'ida leadership with a strategic opportunity to reassert control over the global jihadist movement. Although al-Zarqawi allowed Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri to continue the fight against the West from their ensconced location, there was evidence that al-Zarqawi's brutal attacks on Shi'ite civilians had alienated more Muslims than it had attracted. This, and his general stubbornness and independence, was said to be a source of contention between top al-Qa'ida leaders and the "Butcher of Baghdad."[84]

As Paul Wilkinson of University of St Andrews in Scotland put it, "A number of al-Qa'ida figures were uncomfortable with the tactics he was using in Iraq . . . It was quite clear with Zarqawi that as far as the al-Qa'ida core leadership goes, they couldn't control the way in which their network affiliates operated."[85]

Such analysts felt the costs of failing to reassert this strategic control over al-Qa'ida in Iraq might significantly reduce al-Qa'ida's relevance to the jihadist struggle.[86] Yet most seemed to feel that al-Qa'ida would not allow this to occur. "Al-Qa'ida headquarters will now have more influence on the Iraqi branch. At least, I think they'll be in a far better position than before," said Mustafa Alani, a terrorism analyst at the Gulf Research Center in Dubai.[87]

An Uncertain Successor with Uncertain Competence

The Mujahedeen Shura Council, the Zarqawi-created umbrella organization for Iraq's Islamist insurgent groups, posted an Internet statement almost immediately after al-Zarqawi's death that claimed several attacks on U.S. troops and Iraqi forces. Although those attacks were not verified, it was an illustration that such groups were anxious to prove their continued relevance.[88] Another statement said that "big operations" were being planned that would "shake the enemy."[89]

Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi, who had previously succeeded al-Zarqawi as the head of the Mujahedeen Shura Council, posted a statement that called on Muslims to continue the fight and seemed to call for new recruits. "Iraq is the front line of defense for Islam and Muslims. So, don't miss this opportunity to join the Mujahedeen and the martyrs," said an al-Baghdadi statement.[90] Another statement by him was more panicked, "Where is your money? Where is your money? And where are your men?"[91]

The al-Qa'ida Web site also attempted to portray al-Zarqawi as a martyr and included wording that hinted at the possibility that his short-lived survival after the massive U.S. strike was due to some mystical qualities about him. "This is a martyr's miracle. Tons of bombs. . .and the face of the lion is still there," said one posting.[92]

In an effort to reassert their viciousness and strength after al-Zarqawi's death, Ansar al-Sunna, a group of mostly Iraqi Islamists but closely associated with al-Qa'ida, posted a video showing the beheading of three members of Iraq's police forces. On the video, the men admitted to being members of the "Wolf Brigade," which had recently been singled out by Iraqi politicians for committing atrocities against Sunni civilians. The video claimed that the three men had kidnapped a group of Sunnis at a checkpoint and subsequently beheaded them. The end of the video warned all of those who would join Iraq's security forces: "You will live in terror until we eliminate you and your fate will be in hell."[93] Although once popular with Islamist insurgents, taped beheadings have since declined and become relatively rare.

Choosing a New Leader

Shortly after al-Zarqawi's death, al-Qa'ida in Iraq declared via an Internet statement that Abu Hamza al-Muhajer would become the organization's new leader. This individual, unknown to U.S. intelligence, had not appeared in any previous al-Qa'ida documents or statements. Al-Muhajer, the new leader's nom de guerre, is Arabic for "immigrant." Analysts speculated that this could indicate that he was a foreigner, and it could mean that al-Qa'ida in Iraq would continue its tactics of mass-casualty suicide bombings against civilians, initiated under al-Zarqawi. It also seemed to imply a new emphasis on secrecy.[94]

However, on June 15, 2006, the U.S. military officially reported that Abu Ayyub al-Masri was the same person as Abu Hamza al-Muhajer. Reporting on this development, Major General Caldwell said, "Al-Masri's intimate knowledge of al-Qa'ida in Iraq and his close relationship with [al-Zarqawi's] operations will undoubtedly help facilitate and enable them to regain some momentum if, in fact, he is the one that assumes the leadership role"[95] Al-Masri had trained with al-Zarqawi in Afghanistan and was believed to have created the first al-Qa'ida cell in Iraq in 2002. Caldwell also indicated that al-Masri had a close relationship with al-Qa'ida's "number two" man, al-Zawahiri, also an Egyptian.[96]

Over the summer of 2006, there were signs that al-Zarqawi's successor was diversifying his support base. According to a Pentagon consultant, "Zarqawi was a hardliner in his recruitment practices, while al-Masri adopted a 'big tent approach.' People who were previously excluded from al-Qa'ida in Iraq because they [lacked] exceeding levels of fanaticism [were] now allowed in."[97]

The Future of Al-Qa'ida in Iraq

Reports of divisions and weaknesses in al-Qa'ida sometimes seemed to be wishful thinking and disinformation as much as fact. The United States had, however, scored

increasing success against the overall structure of organization, and its intelligence and targeting capabilities had improved significantly. Much of this improvement came from new intelligence methods. How much came from Iraqi informers inside and outside of al-Qa'ida is hard to determine. The United States emphasized Iraqi sources, but this may be to protect intelligence sources and methods and partly political warfare.

According to the August–November "Measuring Stability and Security" Quarterly Report to Congress,

> The emergence of Abu Ayub al-Masri as leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq demonstrated its flexibility and depth, as well as its reliance on non-Iraqis. Al-Masri benefited from detailed knowledge of former al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's planning as well as his own extensive operational experience, allowing him to carry forward many of his predecessor's existing strategies. Al-Masri has attempted to set the tone for the Iraqi jihad and to solidify the perception of continued strong leadership within al-Qaeda in Iraq. Since al-Masri assumed leadership, al-Qaeda in Iraq has continued its main strategy of instigating sectarian violence using high profile attacks against Shi'a civilians.[98]

The Coalition and the Iraqi government did not have the ability to go on to successfully attack the entire organization or the full mix of insurgent groups after the success against al-Zarqawi. The bulk of al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia was Iraqi, not foreign, and it had developed a highly compartmented organization, with regional emirs and cells with a high degree of isolation and security and a high degree of independence. The end result might have been that most of al-Qa'ida survived and even "moderated" in ways that expanded its reach in ways al-Zarqawi's extremism prevented.

In mid-June 2006 an al-Qa'ida document was released that documented the organization's strategy. Major General Caldwell stated that the document had been found by U.S. troops some three weeks before the air strike on al-Zarqawi. The first part of the document indicated that al-Zarqawi/al-Qa'ida in Iraq was very concerned about the state of the insurgency and Coalition victories. The second part defined the goal of al-Qa'ida in Iraq as being to "entangle the American forces into another war." The third part laid out how that "war" would be started through a propaganda and terror campaign that implicates the Shi'a.[99] The exact source of the document was unclear.

The translation of the document provided by the Iraqi government read as follows, and—if nothing else—provided interesting insights into al-Qa'ida's past and future strategy:

> The situation and conditions of the resistance in Iraq have reached a point that requires a review of the events and of the work being done inside Iraq. Such a study is needed in order to show the best means to accomplish the required goals, especially that the forces of the National Guard have succeeded in forming an enormous shield protecting the American forces and have reduced substantially the losses that were solely suffered by the American forces. This is in addition to the role, played by the Shi'a (the leadership

and masses) by supporting the occupation, working to defeat the resistance and by informing on its elements.

As an overall picture, time has been an element in affecting negatively the forces of the occupying countries, due to the losses they sustain economically in human lives, which are increasing with time. However, here in Iraq, time is now beginning to be of service to the American forces and harmful to the resistance for the following reasons:

1. By allowing the American forces to form the forces of the National Guard, to reinforce them and enable them to undertake military operations against the resistance.

2. By undertaking massive arrest operations, invading regions that have an impact on the resistance, and hence causing the resistance to lose many of its elements.

3. By undertaking a media campaign against the resistance resulting in weakening its influence inside the country and presenting its work as harmful to the population rather than being beneficial to the population.

4. By tightening the resistance's financial outlets, restricting its moral options and by confiscating its ammunition and weapons.

5. By creating a big division among the ranks of the resistance and jeopardizing its attack operations, it has weakened its influence and internal support of its elements, thus resulting in a decline of the resistance's assaults.

6. By allowing an increase in the number of countries and elements supporting the occupation or at least allowing to become neutral in their stand toward us in contrast to their previous stand or refusal of the occupation.

7. By taking advantage of the resistance's mistakes and magnifying them in order to misinform.

Based on the above points, it became necessary that these matters should be treated one by one:

1. To improve the image of the resistance in society, increase the number of supporters who are refusing occupation and show the clash of interest between society and the occupation and its collaborators. To use the media for spreading an effective and creative image of the resistance.

2. To assist some of the people of the resistance to infiltrate the ranks of the National Guard in order to spy on them for the purpose of weakening the ranks of the National Guard when necessary, and to be able to use their modern weapons.

3. To reorganize for recruiting new elements for the resistance.

4. To establish centers and factories to produce and manufacture and improve on weapons and to produce new ones.

5. To unify the ranks of the resistance, to prevent controversies and prejudice and to adhere to piety and follow the leadership.

6. To create division and strife between American and other countries and among the elements disagreeing with it.

7. To avoid mistakes that will blemish the image of the resistance and show it as the enemy of the nation.

In general and despite the current bleak situation, we think that the best suggestion in order to get out of this crisis is to entangle the American forces into another war against another country or with another of our enemy force, that is to try and inflame the situation between America and Iraq or between America and the Shi'a in general.

Specifically the Sistani Shi'a, since most of the support that the Americans are getting is from the Sistani Shi'a, then, there is a possibility to instill differences between them

and to weaken the support line between them; in addition to the losses we can inflict on both parties. Consequently, to embroil America in another war against another enemy is the answer that we find to be the most appropriate, and to have a war through a delegate has the following benefits:

1. To occupy the Americans by another front will allow the resistance freedom of movement and alleviate the pressure imposed on it.

2. To dissolve the cohesion between the Americans and the Shi'a will weaken and close this front.

3. To have a loss of trust between the Americans and the Shi'a will cause the Americans to lose many of their spies.

4. To involve both parties, the Americans and the Shi'a, in a war that will result in both parties being losers.

5. Thus, the Americans will be forced to ask the Sunni for help.

6. To take advantage of some of the Shi'a elements that will allow the resistance to move among them.

7. To weaken the media's side which is presenting a tarnished image of the resistance, mainly conveyed by the Shi'a.

8. To enlarge the geographical area of the resistance movement.

9. To provide popular support and cooperation by the people.

The resistance fighters have learned from the result and the great benefits they reaped, when a struggle ensued between the Americans and the Army of Al-Mahdi. However, we have to notice that this trouble or this delegated war that must be ignited can be accomplished through:

1. A war between the Shi'a and the Americans.

2. A war between the Shi'a and the secular population (such as Ayad 'Alawi and al-Jalabi.)

3. A war between the Shi'a and the Kurds.

4. A war between Ahmad al-Halabi and his people and Ayad 'Alawi and his people.

5. A war between the group of al-Hakim and the group of al-Sadr.

6. A war between the Shi'a of Iraq and the Sunni of the Arab countries in the gulf.

7. A war between the Americans and Iraq. We have noticed that the best of these wars to be ignited is the one between the Americans and Iran, because it will have many benefits in favor of the Sunni and the resistance, such as:

1. Freeing the Sunni people in Iraq, who are (30 percent) of the population and under the Shi'a Rule.

2. Drowning the Americans in another war that will engage many of their forces.

3. The possibility of acquiring new weapons from the Iranian side, either after the fall of Iran or during the battles.

4. To entice Iran towards helping the resistance because of its need for its help.

5. Weakening the Shi'a supply line.

The question remains, how to draw the Americans into fighting a war against Iran? It is not known whether America is serious in its animosity towards Iraq, because of the big support Iran is offering to America in its war in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Hence, it is necessary first to exaggerate the Iranian danger and to convince America and the west in general, of the real danger coming from Iran, and the following would do this:

1. By disseminating threatening messages against American interests and the American people and attribute them to a Shi'a Iranian side.

2. By executing operations of kidnapping hostages and implicating the Shi'a Iranian side.

3. By advertising that Iran has chemical and nuclear weapons and is threatening the west with these weapons.

4. By executing exploding operations in the west and accusing Iran by planting Iranian Shi'a fingerprints and evidence.

5. By declaring the existence of a relationship between Iran and terrorist groups (as termed by the Americans).

6. By disseminating bogus messages about confessions showing that Iran is in possession of weapons of mass destruction or that there are attempts by the Iranian intelligence to undertake terrorist operations in America and the West and against Western interests.

Let us hope for success and for God's help.

In summary, there is little doubt that al-Zarqawi's death had some positive impacts. There was no other figure in the insurgency that captured Iraq and the world's attention. Most other leaders were nearly faceless and many were unknown. At the same time, al-Zarqawi's extremism had sometimes been a liability. His cruelty and calls for jihad against Shi'ites, his willingness to attack civilians and fellow Muslims, helped push at least some Sunnis away from the insurgency, divided even some elements of al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia, and had been a partial liability.

THE ROLE OF SHI'ITE MILITIAS IN THE ESCALATING CIVIL CONFLICT

The sectarian violence inflicted by Shi'ite militias continued to play a greater role in pushing the country into full-scale civil conflict. Many of the militias involved had existed since 2003. Sadr's Mahdi Army, for example, first attacked U.S. troops in the summer after the initial invasion. In 2004 and 2005 unabated insurgent attacks pushed the Shi'ites toward civil war and sectarian tensions escalated steadily. By the summer of 2006, it was clear that confrontations between Shi'ite and Sunni armed groups had reached low-level civil war.

In early August, Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., attributed the majority of recent violent deaths in Baghdad to Shi'ite death squads—signaling a shift in the main threats facing U.S. operations in the capital, which originally centered on Sunni insurgents and al-Qa'ida elements.[100]

The August 2006 Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress on Iraq warned that militias—whether legal or illegal—ultimately created "a more dangerous environment for the Iraqi community . . . Their continued existence challenges the legitimacy of the constitutional government and a conduit for foreign interference."[101]

As part of renewed efforts to secure Baghdad, General Casey asserted that U.S. and Iraqi forces would dismantle all death squads, regardless of their affiliation. He stated, "We're going after people who are actively killing and murdering other Iraqis."[102] Shi'ite militias were often blamed for execution-style assassinations

against Sunnis that involved massive "body dumps" across Baghdad and other parts of the country.

Renewed Tensions between the Mahdi Army and the United States

In spite of rising tensions between U.S. forces and the Mahdi Army, the United States tried to avoid an open confrontation with the militia. Following the attack on Sadr City, President Jalal Talabani met with General Casey to discuss security operations in Baghdad. He told Casey that "it is [in] no one's interest to have a confrontation with Sadr's movement."[103] Al-Sadr's party held 30 seats in the 275-member National Assembly and controlled six ministries. Prime Minister Maliki had secured the position only with al-Sadr's support, and the government could fall apart just as easily without it. According to the U.S. military, there were between 6,000 and 10,000 Mahdi Army militiamen in Baghdad.

This did not prevent the United States, however, from clashing with elements of the Sadr militia. These developments affected fighting in Baghdad. On August 7, 2006, Iraqi troops and American security advisers led an air and ground attack on Sadr City, a stronghold of Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army. According to a U.S. military statement, the operation was aimed at "individuals involved in punishment and torture cell activities."[104] Iraqi forces and U.S. advisers came under fire that "lasted for the duration of the operation and continued as they left the neighborhood."[105] The raid killed 3 people, and wounded 12 others.

The Iraqi government reacted by breaking with the United States. Prime Minister al-Maliki sharply criticized the raid. He said, "This operation used weapons that are unreasonable to detain someone—like using planes."[106] In a statement on government television, he said that he was "very angered and pained" and cautioned that "reconciliation cannot go hand in hand with operations that violate the rights of citizens this way."[107] He said, "This operation is rejected, and it was conducted without the agreement of the government."[108] Al-Maliki apologized to Iraqis and said that "this won't happen again."[109]

Al-Maliki's response effectively denied the Coalition and the ISF the ability to bring stability to Baghdad for the rest of 2006. Although the prime minister had made repeated calls for the disarming of militias, he was not about to allow U.S. forces to clamp down on the Mahdi Army.

Internal Shi'ite Divisions

In addition to the sectarian power struggle between Sunnis and Shi'ites, violence between rivaling Shi'ite factions and growing divisions within Shi'ite militias emerged as new threats to the country's stability. Power struggles among political groups, including Nuri al-Maliki's Islamic Da'wa Party, the rival SCIRI, and al-Sadr's movement, became more pronounced.

Reports indicated that Moqtada al-Sadr faced new challenges to his authority, as some followers were breaking away from his command and independent cells were

developing within the Mahdi Army. Additionally, serious tensions were emerging between al-Sadr and the mainstream "quietest" Shi'ite clergy.

Militia members, Iraqi politicians, and Western officials described the Mahdi Army as an increasingly fluid organization that was splintering into factions of fighters, and local commanders were growing more distant from a central authority figure. According to U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad, "There are forces that are controlled by Moqtada, but there are commanders that are not controlled by him; there are death squads that are not controlled by him."[110] Iraqi Col. Talib Abdul Razzaq, a battalion commander in Baghdad, said, "each section of Sadr City has its own leader. But there is no coordination among them."[111]

While the severity of this fragmentation was uncertain, it pointed to a larger obstacle in U.S. efforts to curb violence in Iraq: as the civil conflict evolved, it was becoming increasingly difficult for U.S. forces to identify and characterize the perpetrators of violence. It was unclear whether acts of violence—from extrajudicial assassinations to criminal operations—were coordinated or sporadic, national or local, and to what extent they involved a central command. The August 2006 Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress noted that the attacks in Iraq could not "be categorized as the result of a single organized or unified opposition or insurgency," and warned that the security situation was "at its most complex state since the initiation of Operation Iraqi Freedom."[112]

It was also clear by mid-2006 that Islamist groups in the Sh'ite south were enforcing strict interpretations of Islamic law. This often resulted in threats or intimidation against those who were reluctant to follow these rules. Unions and mixed-gender gatherings were broken up and freedom of speech at universities and within political parties was restricted.[113]

For example, the sale of liquor was banned as were "public amusements deemed un-Islamic." The Transportation Ministry, controlled by al-Sadr supporters, dismantled a transport workers union and transferred its workers. One of two individuals, who quit the main Shi'ite political party after being labeled as a traitor in public, recanted his views.[114]

With U.S. forces focusing on the insurgency in the central and eastern portions of Iraq, the Shi'ite south had largely been left to its own devices and was allowed to self-govern. Brig. James Everard characterized the situation, "Freedom of speech, freedom of expression: it just hasn't quite worked out the way it was planned. They're not prepared to debate. They tend to do things at the end of a gun."[115] One of the sources of this violence was the large number of militias and militia members, wielded by local political leaders for their own ends. The city's 15,000-man police force was double its authorized side.[116] The situation on the streets was frequently referred to as "turf wars" or mafia-style rule.[117]

Although federalism was one core component of disagreement between the various Shi'ite political factions in the south, the potential for enormous wealth from oil exports for whatever party emerged dominant led to fierce and violent competition. The ruling party at the time, the Fadhila Party, controlled the security forces charged with guarding the oil business and its detractors said that Fadhila leaders

used their control of this sector to profit personally. The fact that almost all politicians were engaged in at least some corruption, however, made it difficult for any side to press too hard on the issue.[118]

For example, Muhammad al-Waeli, the governor of Basra, was a member of the religious Fadhila Party that dominated the provincial council and maintained close relations with al-Sadr.[119] SCIRI, holding the minority of seats in that council, sought to remove him since he was appointed, but political efforts to do so were futile.[120]

The erosion of democracy and a simultaneous increase in violent attacks, including a suicide bomber that killed 32 and wounded 77 at a marketplace, prompted new Prime Minister al-Maliki to declare a state of emergency in Basra in early June.[121] The murder rate of May (85) was triple that of January.[122]

THE KURDISH DIMENSION: GROWING ETHNIC TENSION

The role of the Kurds in fueling separatism and pushing the country toward civil war was overlooked in many U.S. assessments of risk in Iraq well into 2006. Such indifference was still reflected in the failure of the August 2006 Pentagon Report to Congress on Iraq to address the Kurdish dimension in its analysis on the concern of civil war. Additionally, U.S. reporting tended to gloss over developments pertaining to the Kurds, often focusing on sectarian rather than ethnic strife.

The Struggle for Kirkuk

A report released by the International Crisis Group in July 2006 addressed the "percolating conflict" in Kirkuk, which it described, as "equal parts street brawl over oil riches, ethnic competition over identity between Kurdish, Turkoman, Arab and Assyrian-Chaldean communities, and a titanic clash between two nations, Arab and Kurd."[123] While Kurds continued to claim that they comprised the majority of the population in Kirkuk, American officials estimated that the ethnic breakdown was closer to one-third Kurdish, one-third Turkomans, and one-third Sunni Arab.[124]

At least 84 people were killed in Kirkuk and its surrounding areas in the first three weeks of July.[125] In late July, an Iraqi Army official said that the region had "lately witnessed escalations of armed attacks against the security forces and Iraqi civilians."[126] Iraqi police attributed the rise in violence to Sunni insurgent groups who were trying to make Kurdish residents doubt their sense of security. Some Sunni Arab leaders blamed the United States for shifting Iraqi forces out of volatile parts of the region, leaving areas with inadequate policing forces and making them more vulnerable to attacks. Rakan Saeed, a Sunni Arab politician, criticized Iraqi security forces for withdrawing from Hawija, an Arab city outside of Kirkuk, arguing that the "area needs more police elements, especially the places that see increased terrorist activity."[127] U.S. military officers contended that they were working to create an integrated force in the area.

The Role of Turkey

The Kurdish issue in northern Iraq had significant regional implications and posed two major threats to Turkey. The first threat involved national security concerns of Kurdish rebels launching attacks in Turkish territory. Ankara was engaging in heavy diplomacy with both the U.S. and Iraqi administrations to crack down on Kurdish separatist groups in northern Iraq, whose chief objective was the establishment of an independent Kurdistan in and around Turkey. Since 2004, the Kurdistan's Worker's Party (PKK)—which waged a separatist war in Turkey in the 1980 and 1990s—stepped up the frequency of its attacks against Kurdish security forces.[128]

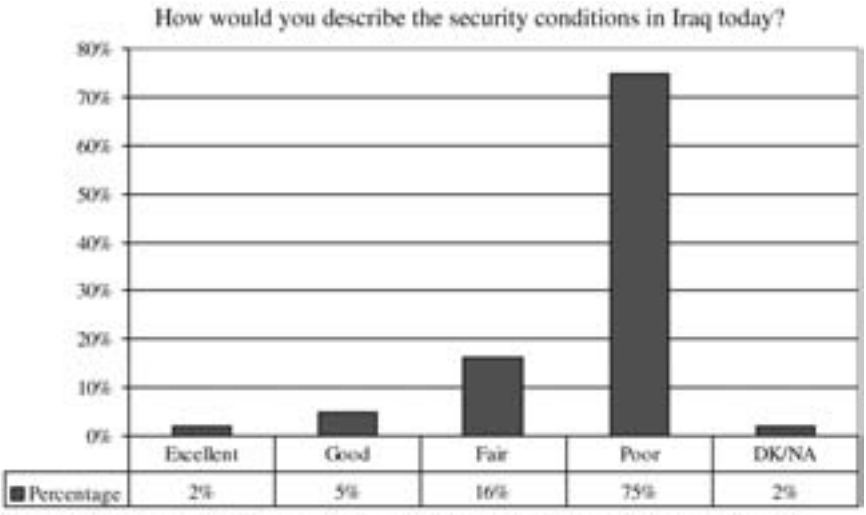
The second threat related to the concern that Kurdish autonomy in Iraqi would catalyze a separatist movement among Turkey's own Kurdish population. Fear of a Kurdish separatist movement within Turkey had policy makers in Ankara consistently oppose the establishment of a strong autonomous Kurdish zone within Iraq.

Over the summer, there were signs that "the PKK's war [was] spreading in unpredictable directions" and drawing in regional actors. In late June, the PKK accused Iran of launching attacks on it bases in northern Iraq—perhaps under Turkish auspices—and the organization threatened retaliation inside Iran.[129] Turkey's ambassador to Washington announced later that Ankara had evidence that up to 3,000 fighters from the PKK had moved from positions in northern Iraq to the Turkish border in order to carry out operations inside Turkey.[130]

LIVING IN FEAR: IRAQI PUBLIC OPINION ON SECURITY

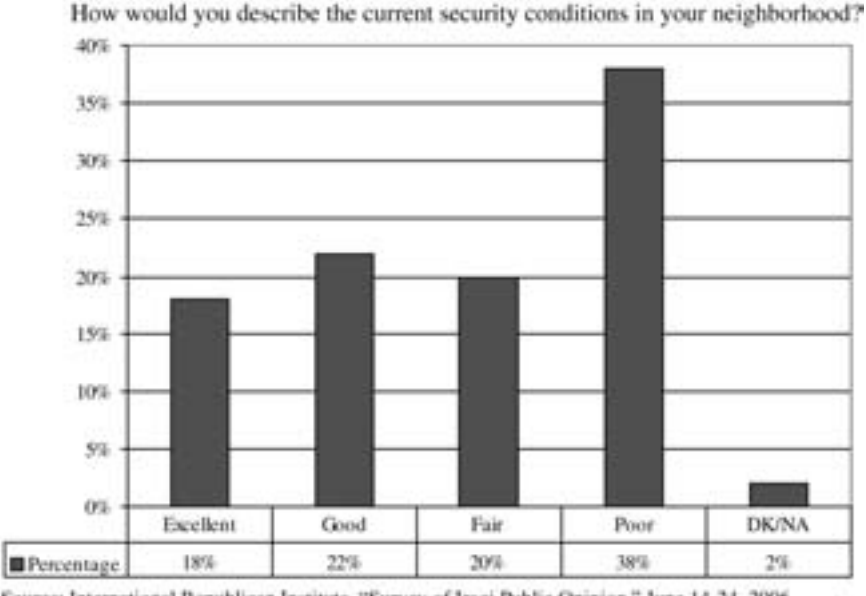
It is hardly surprising that Iraqis were increasingly concerned about their safety amid the growing sectarian violence. Respondents now cited security as the biggest challenge in their lives rather than economic or political issues. The sectarian violence made walking down the street too dangerous for many Iraqis living in Baghdad and other contested towns. These residents now looked to locally armed forces and militias for protection.

- Figure 9.11 illustrates that 75 percent of Iraqis in June 2006 described the security condition in Iraq as a country as "poor," according to the IRI polling data shown. However, when respondents were asked to describe security conditions in their respective neighborhoods, the distribution depicted a somewhat more optimistic assessment.
- As shown in Figure 9.12, 38 percent described the security conditions in their neighborhood as "poor," 20 percent as fair, 22 percent as good, and 18 percent as excellent.
- The regional breakdown of security conditions in different neighborhoods, illustrated as Figure 9.13, indicated that Iraqis in Kurdish areas felt the safest, with 77 percent describing personal security conditions as excellent. Responses from northern Arab, Sunni areas, and Baghdad indicated much less secure environments in these neighborhoods.



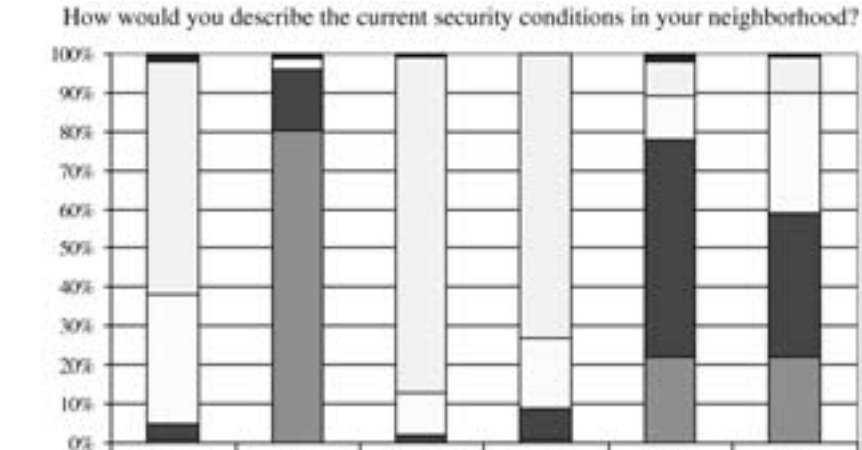
Source: International Republican Institute, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," June 14-24, 2006.

Figure 9.11 Overall Security Conditions in Iraq: June 2006



Source: International Republican Institute, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," June 14-24, 2006.

Figure 9.12 Security Conditions in Neighborhood: June 2006



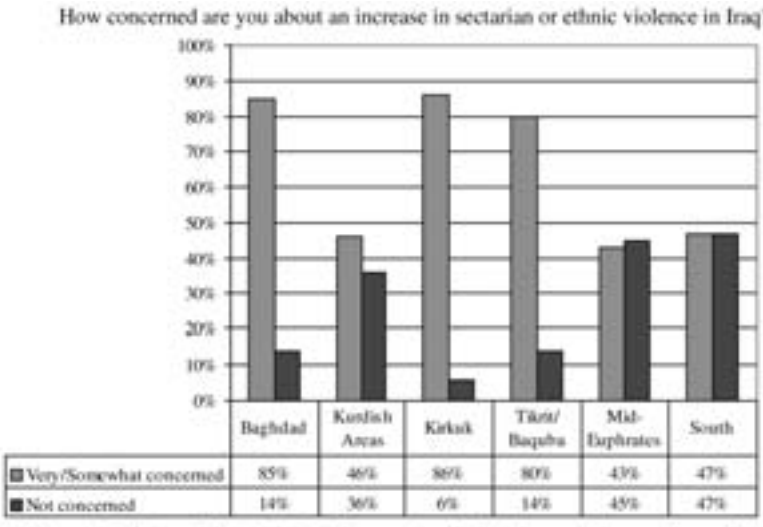
	Baghdad	Kurdish Area	Northern Arab	Sunni Areas	Mid-Euphrates	South
DK/NA	2%	1%	1%	-	2%	1%
Poor	60%	-	86%	73%	9%	9%
Fair	33%	3%	11%	18%	11%	31%
Good	4%	15%	2%	8%	56%	37%
Excellent	1%	77%	-	1%	22%	22%

Source: International Republican Institute, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," June 14-24, 2006.

Figure 9.13 Security Conditions in Neighborhoods–Regional Breakdown: June 2006

- The August 2006 Pentagon Report to Congress on Iraq included a poll assessing the level of Iraqi concern of sectarian and ethnic violence. The graph, depicted as Figure 9.14, showed markedly high levels of concern in Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Tikrit/Baquba, and generally high levels of anxiousness throughout the country.
- Another graph, Figure 9.15, included in the Pentagon report, measured Iraqi confidence in various security forces—namely the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi police, the Badr Organization, the Mahdi Army, and the Peshmerga—to improve the situation in the country.

The text of the DoD report for August 2006 noted that confidence in the Iraqi Army remained relatively constant since the previous reporting period, with the exception of Baghdad, where public confidence in the Iraqi military rose from 69 to 78 percent. But the report later noted that this change was coupled with increased confidence in militias.[131] Confidence in the Badr Organization in Baghdad increased from roughly 23 to 42 percent since the last reporting period. Respondents in Kurdish areas reported increased faith in the Iraqi military, but they also voiced higher levels of confidence in the Peshmerga.



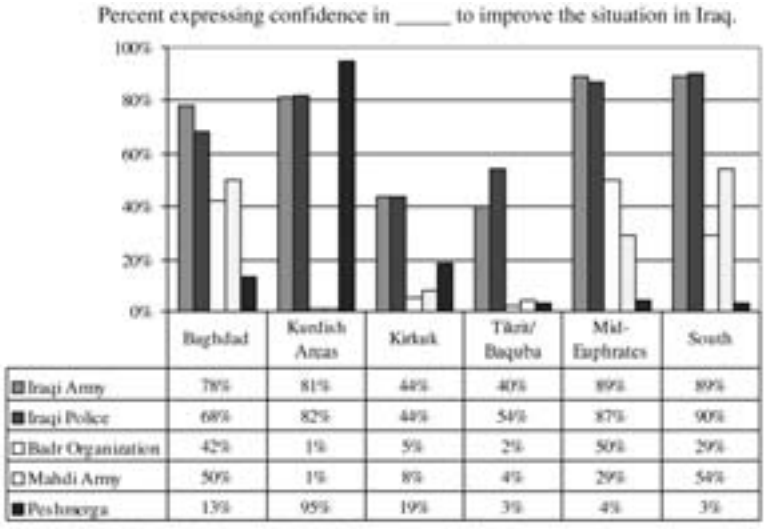
Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p. 38.
Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.
Department of State, Office of Research, June 21-July 6, 2006.
Sample sizes: Baghdad-173; Kurdish Areas-308; Kirkuk-108; Tikrit/Baquba-210; Mid-Euphrates-523; South-432
Margin of Error: ± ±4 percent for the overall sample, but varies among regions.

Figure 9.14 Concern of Sectarian and Ethnic Violence: June/July 2006

STEPPED UP SECURITY EFFORTS IN BAGHDAD

The death of al-Zarqawi and the full creation of the new Iraqi government did give Iraqi and U.S. officials an opportunity to use the momentum created by these new developments to try to move forward at the strategic and operational levels. President Bush convened a cabinet meeting at Camp David to discuss the next steps in Iraq and secretly flew into Baghdad on June 13, 2006, the first time he had been in the country since November 2003. Only U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld knew of his departure; Maliki, who officially received Bush, did not know of his arrival until only moments before.[132]

During his meeting with al-Maliki and other Iraqi leaders, Bush stressed that "the fate and the future of Iraq is in your hands." Bush also reassured the Iraqi people, some wary of fading U.S. support, "that when America gives a commitment, America will keep its commitment.[133] Bush's visit, however, sparked protests in Baghdad, where hundreds of supporters of al-Sadr demonstrated in the streets demanding the United States to withdraw its force, chanting, "Iraq is for Iraqis," and "No to the occupation." Some reports indicated that the number of protestors reached 2,000.[134]



	Baghdad	Kurdish Areas	Kirkuk	Tikrit/ Baquba	Mid-Euphrates	South
Iraqi Army	78%	81%	44%	40%	89%	89%
Iraqi Police	68%	82%	44%	54%	87%	90%
Badr Organization	42%	1%	5%	2%	50%	29%
Mahdi Army	50%	1%	8%	4%	29%	54%
Peshmerga	13%	95%	19%	3%	4%	3%

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq." Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p. 38.
Data points are estimates from the DoD report.
Department of State, Office of Research, June 21-July 6, 2006.
Sample sizes: Baghdad-173; Kurdish Areas-308; Kirkuk-108; Tikrit/Baquba-210; Mid-Euphrates-523; South-437
Margin of error: ±4 percent for the overall sample, but varies among regions.
Note: Data from Mosul is not included in this chart. It was determined to be unreliable.

Figure 9.15 Confidence in Different Security Forces: June/July 2006

The long-deferred MNF-I and ISF effort to "retake" Baghdad was implemented the day following Bush's visit to Baghdad. Somewhere between 70,000 and 75,000 U.S. forces and Iraqi Army and police units took to the streets of the capital in "Operation Forward Together," twice the size of "Operation Lightning," which took place in the city almost a year earlier.

The plans for the operation, including its predicted duration, were not made clear. Officials did say, however, that there would be a curfew in effect from 8:30 P.M. to 6 A.M. dusk until dawn every day and on Fridays, cars would be prohibited from the streets for four hours in the afternoon, to schedule around prayer hours. Numerous patrols and checkpoints were planned as well. Additionally, citizens would not be allowed to carry guns on the street outside their homes.[135] Security officials also indicated that if necessary, air strikes would be permitted.[136]

Maj. Gen. Abed Jassem, in the Ministry of Defense, said that the operations would focus on "hot spots" in the capital, conducting targeted raids and searches in known insurgent areas. General Jassem also added that two key goals of the stepped up security presence were to restore public confidence in Iraqi forces and to integrate the militias into the security forces. He added that a separate operation was being planned for the province of Diyala, where al-Zarqawi was killed days earlier, just outside of Baghdad.[137]

Maj. Gen. Mahdi al-Gharrawi, an officer in the Ministry of Interior, said that forces had obtained specific intelligence regarding al-Qa'ida locations in the city.[138] During a press conference in the Rose Garden upon his return to Washington, President Bush gave similar indications saying, "New intelligence from those raids [after al-Zarqawi's death] which will enable us to keep the pressure on the foreigners and local Iraqis who are killing innocent lives."[139]

According to newly confirmed Interior Minister Maj. Gen. Mahmoud Wailli, the actual number of troops in the city was to remain the same. He emphasized that the operation went beyond the military realm and contained economic incentives for the Iraqi people such as gasoline incentives and proposed efforts for "beautifying" a war-torn city.[140] Al-Maliki urged Iraqis to comply with the new security measures and to be patient. He reassured the people of Baghdad that the ISF would not specifically target any one sect or ethnicity.[141]

"Whack a Mole"

Iraqi forces reported no resistance during the first day of the operation. "The people are feeling comfortable with the new security measures and they are waving to us. Until now, no classes have erupted and no bullets have been fired at us," said Maj. Gen. Mahdi al-Gharrawi, the commander of public order forces under the MOI.[142]

However, progress from Operation Together Forward was slow and the plan was widely dismissed for failing to achieve its desired aims when violence in the capital reached heightened levels in July. Around two weeks after the security initiative was implemented, Maj. Gen. William Caldwell announced that violence in Baghdad had decreased only slightly. "We do not see an upward trend," he said. "We . . . see a slight decrease [in violence] but not of the degree we would like to see at this point."[143]

By the end of July, Caldwell acknowledged, "We have not witnessed the reduction in violence one would have hoped for."[144] In July, there were 558 violent incidents in Baghdad, up 10 percent from the four-month average. These attacks resulted in 2,100 deaths, 77 percent of which were attributed to sectarian violence.[145]

That same week, Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., acknowledged that an increase in sectarian violence could require U.S. forces to deploy more troops in Baghdad. During a news conference with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on July 12, Casey attributed the spike in violence in July to Sunni terrorists affiliated with al-Qa'ida, and Shi'ite "death squads" engaging in indiscriminate attacks against civilians.[146] Rumsfeld said that the number of Iraqi and American forces had increased to about 55,000 from 40,000 in attempts to curb the violence in the capital.

The August 2006 DoD Quarterly Report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," acknowledged the failure of the security operation to curb the rising attack levels that had taken place in May and June. It stated that "the average of 23.7 attacks per day across Baghdad's 10 districts was virtually unchanged from the 23.8 average daily attacks that occurred the month prior to the operation." The report also noted "the rate of sectarian-style killings continued to rise, primarily in and around Baghdad."[147]

Prime Minister al-Maliki still stressed that the national reconciliation plan was "the only and last way to save the security and political situation in the country." "We all have this last chance to reconcile and work hard to avoid conflict and the blood," he said during a July address to parliament. "If it fails, God forbid, I don't know what will be Iraq's fate."[148]

The United States Tries to Take the Lead

In late July, Pentagon officials announced a "new" security plan to increase the number of U.S. and Iraqi troops stationed in the capital. This plan became known as "Operation Together Forward II." Gen. John P. Abizaid, head of U.S. Central Command. said in a July 21 interview, "The country can deal with the insurgency better than it can with the sectarian violence, and it needs to move decisively against the sectarian violence now."[149]

The security plan involved the addition of the Army's 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team and four military police companies, boosting U.S. troop levels in Baghdad by more than 4,000, to be matched by the addition of at least 4,000 Iraqi soldiers. The plan would temporarily increase the U.S. presence in Iraq to above 130,000.[150] The core security operation was planned to last three months and would target militia-run death squads.[151]

Major General Caldwell declared in late July, "Whoever wins the Baghdad area, whoever is able to bring peace and security to that area, is going to set the conditions to stabilize this country."[152] And in late August, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad asserted that the United States simply "[could] not achieve its goals of a democratic, stable and secure Iraq if the unacceptable levels of violence in Baghdad persisted."[153] He outlined three principal components for this Baghdad Security Plan that were very close to both the plan Maliki had announced earlier in the summer and to the "surge" plan for Baghdad that President Bush later set forth as a "new" plan in January 2007:[154]

- *Stabilizing Baghdad zone by zone*. Four Iraqi Army battalions, two Coalition brigades and five military police companies will be redeployed to Baghdad, resulting in more than 12,000 additional forces on the city's streets. The National Police will simultaneously undergo intensive retraining, with each brigade to be subjected to a three-day assessment period, with its leadership evaluated and, if necessary, replaced. Each brigade will subsequently receive additional training focused on countering violent sectarianism before redeployment.
- *Disrupting support zones*. Even as Iraqi and Coalition forces concentrate on securing specific neighborhoods, they will continue to conduct targeted operations in other zones that are staging areas for the violence. This includes targeted raids and other operations on areas outside of Baghdad's center, where planning cells, car-bomb factories and terrorist safe houses are located. This will degrade the ability of the terrorists and death squads to mount offensive operations into the areas we are working to stabilize.

- *Undertaking civic action and economic development*. After joint Coalition and Iraqi military operations have secured a neighborhood or district, a structure of Iraqi security forces sufficient to maintain the peace is expected to be left in place and reinforced with the capacity to undertake civic action and foster economic revitalization. This will be supported with $500 million in funds from Prime Minister Maliki's government and at least $130 million of US funds. In addition, a moral compact between the religious leaders of the two Islamic communities—which will ban sectarian killings—will delegitimize the violence. Such a compact would deny the killers a political or religious sanctuary while Iraqi and Coalition forces deny them physical shelter. For the longer term, the plan seeks to induce insurgents and militias to lay down their arms by implementing a program to demobilize unauthorized armed groups. It will also review the implementation of the de-Baathification process—referring those accused of crimes to the judiciary and reconciling with the rest.

Defense experts and political officials expressed diverging points of view on whether such a second phase of Operation Together Forward would be any more successful in curbing sectarian violence. Supporters of the plan stressed that Baghdad was the "center of gravity," and its security was paramount to stabilizing the country. Sending additional U.S. troops to back Iraqi forces would allow the Iraqi public to feel safer and more confident. Brig. Gen. Jaleel Khalaf, commander of Iraqi troops in western Baghdad, said that the plan would bring much-needed experience and equipment to Iraqi forces in the capital.[155]

Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish lawmaker and member of the Supreme National Reconciliation Committee, said, "The goal has always been to decrease the presence of U.S. troops in the urban areas. Now they're coming back."[156] And the failure of the first phase of Operation Together Forward to create stability in the capital fed uncertainty about a second attempt.

At the same time, many Sunni Arab political and religious leaders were now more willing to accept increased U.S. troop levels in the country, fearing that a security vacuum would lead to civil war.[157] Some questioned, however, whether deploying more American troops in the capital would curb or provoke sectarian violence. The plan could have a backlash effect—fostering greater resentment toward the U.S. presence in Iraq and eroding Iraqis' confidence in their own security forces. By invoking images of an American "occupation," insurgents could capitalize on the stepped-up U.S. security presence to depict America as the enemy. The plan could also be perceived as a step back in an effort to push Iraqi troops to the forefront.

The new security crackdown did initially show some signs of curbing violence in the capital. At an August 28 press briefing in Baghdad, Maj. Gen. William Caldwell cited "progress toward reducing the number of kidnappings, murders and sectarian violence" in areas where Iraqi and Coalition forces were operating. He said that the number of average killings in Baghdad dropped 46 percent from July to August and that the number of insurgent attacks in the province declined to an average of 23 per day.[158]

Yet, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad warned that "the most concentrated, focused effort to date in the capital"[159] remained susceptible to many of the same obstacles that hindered past efforts:

- A concentration of troops in Baghdad tended to push the action outside of the capital to other areas where Iraqi and U.S. military capabilities were less prevalent.
- While a heavier troop presence could temporarily tone down the violence, insurgents would likely adapt to the emerging security environment and resort to new tactics. Militia members could easily lay low, wait out the Iraqi government and Coalition operations in Baghdad for several months, then regroup and operate at the margins or shift to other areas.
- The Iraqi government was reluctant to act against Shi'ite militias and parties.
- Without steady follow-up in terms of political settlement, government services, and rule of law, having troops "pacify" a city often had little lasting value. And such follow-up efforts would require significant levels of commitment, resources, and time from both the United States and the Iraqi government.

These warnings were all too justified. Iraqi Health Ministry officials reported a marked surge in violence at the end of August and the early weeks of September. According to morgue figures, at least 334 people were killed in Baghdad between August 27 and September 2. The majority had been kidnapped and tortured before they were tied and shot to death.[160] Authorities said that at least 394 other people in Iraq were killed by other means of violence including bombings, mortar attacks, and gunfights.[161]

In Adhamiya, a predominantly Sunni neighborhood of northeastern Baghdad, dozens of dead bodies were discovered each week, and one particular street became so notorious for its body dumps that residents referred to it as "The Street of Death."[162]

The Baghdad morgue reported receiving 1,535 bodies in August. And while the tally represented a 17-percent decrease from numbers in July, it still indicated strikingly high levels of violence and contradicted earlier claims by American officials that death rates had significantly declined.[163]

VIOLENCE OUTSIDE OF BAGHDAD

Violence also continued to escalate outside of the capital. In southern cities such as Basra and Karbala, clashes between Shi'ite militias and Iraqi forces, as well as violence between rivaling militias, became increasingly prevalent. Northern cities, such as Mosul, faced renewed waves of violence along ethnic and sectarian lines.[164]

The Shi'ite South

Power struggles between warring Shi'ite factions became more frequent in the Shi'ite-dominated south. On August 16, Iraqi security officers raided the office of

radical cleric Mahmoud Sarkhi al-Hassani after his followers reportedly tried to assume control of several districts in Karbala. Razouki, a senior official of another Shi'ite group, known as the Fadhila Party, accused al-Hassani's followers of planning to take over religious shrines in the city. The clashes between al-Hassani's followers and Iraqi security forces led to the arrest of 281 members, but al-Hassani's followers later gathered in nearby towns and threatened to march on Karbala.[165]

Rival Shi'ite factions, such as Sadr's Mahdi Army and Fadhila's armed wing, increasingly engaged in open-armed conflicts in Basra. In June, hundreds of al-Hassani's followers attacked the Iranian Consulate after another Shi'ite cleric criticized al-Hassani on Iranian television, describing him as a "fake cleric" and a "pawn of Israel." Prime Minister al-Maliki declared a state of emergency in Basra and deployed several thousand troops to crack down on the militias with an "iron fist."[166]

On August 16, supporters of Sheik Faisal, the leader of the Shi'ite Beni Assad tribe, stormed the governor's office in Basra, accusing his supporters of assassinating their tribal leader. They blamed the rival Shi'ite Fadhila Party of coordinating the attack and demanded that the governor, who was also a member of the Fadhila Party, arrest and hand over the killers. Sheik Faisal, the leader of the Shi'ite Beni Assad tribe was assassinated by unidentified gunmen two days earlier. His supporters accused the Fadhila Party of planning the attack.[167]

One of the key sources of contention in Basra, which contributed to a growing power struggle among political parties, was the issue of oil smuggling. A local official estimated the value of the smuggling trade at $4 billion per year, or the equivalent of roughly 10 percent of the country's gross domestic product.[168]

Contested Territory in Diyala and Mosul

Although Iraqi forces were becoming more capable, the growing threat of the sectarian power struggle underscored their limitations in containing the violence. These limitations led to growing public mistrust in the Iraqi security apparatus, which revealed its divisions along sectarian lines. Many posts, particularly those of police officers, were infiltrated by Shi'ite militia members—who were likely to be more devoted to their religious parties than the national unity government.

In the demographically mixed and contested province of Diyala north of Baghdad, which stretches the area to the west of Baghdad Province to Iran, the sectarian power struggle continued to grow. Warring Sunni and Shi'ite factions competed for territorial control in tit-for-tat cycles of violence, primarily by targeting and driving out civilians on the basis of their sect. Since the summer of 2005 attacks in Diyala have more than doubled, and 60 percent of the more recent attacks were directed at Iraqi civilians.[169]

The influence of the Mahdi Army was prevalent in Khan Bani Sad, located 12 miles northeast of Baghdad. According to U.S. and Iraqi forces, more than 100 militia cells operated in the city, setting up illegal checkpoints on the highways to

Baghdad, kidnapping and murdering Sunnis, and launching attacks on Sunni villages to drive out their inhabitants.[170]

In Mosul, tensions between Arabs and Kurds continued to incite violence. On August 4, insurgents used car bombs to attack local police, killing four officers and wounding eight before the situation was brought under control. Wathiq al-Hamadani, the city's police commander said, "Now we have total control over the security situation, and we are in complete control over all the streets and areas of Mosul," but attacks continued unabated.

On August 15, a suicide bomber drove his explosives-laden truck into the headquarters of President Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, killing at least 9 people, including 4 party members, and wounding 36.[171]

ATTACK AND CASUALTY PATTERNS

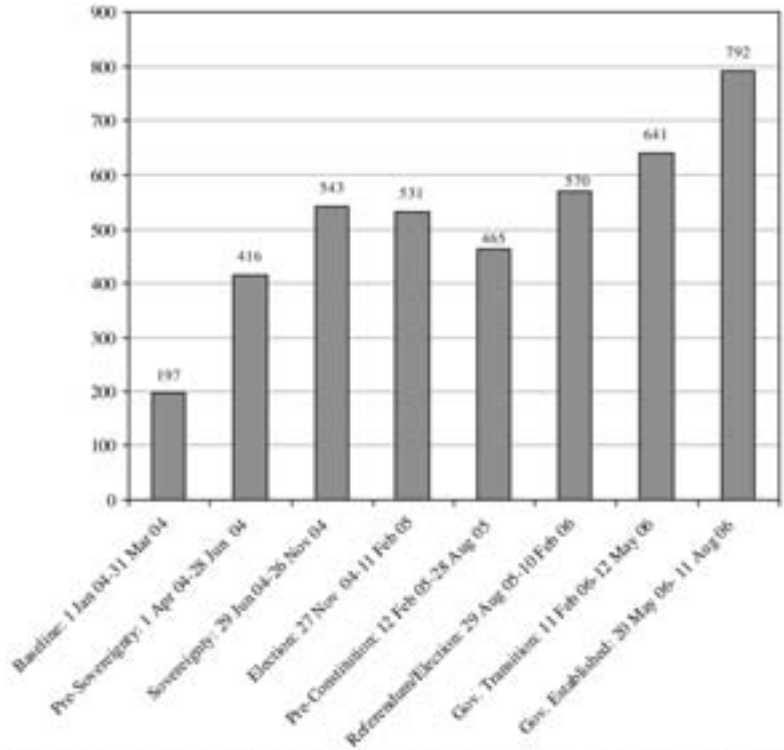
While accurate numbers on the frequency of attacks and the number of causalities in Iraq continued to be unavailable, data provided by the Coalition and the Iraqi government did provide a rough gauge of the growing level of violence. The August 2006 DoD Quarterly Report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," incorporated analysis of attack trends and violence from May 20 to August 11, 2006—a period defined politically by the full establishment of the new Iraqi government.

The Quarterly Report cited a substantial increase in the number of attacks directed against civilians:

> Nationally, in April 2006, civilians were the target of 11 percent of attacks; this increased to 15 percent in June 2006. Baghdad showed a more pronounced shift in the targeting of civilians compared to the national trend. In Baghdad, civilian targets comprised 15 percent of total attacks in April and 22 percent in June.[172]

The Quarterly Report also noted that 63 percent of the attacks in the May to August reporting period were targeted at Coalition forces, the majority of which were considered "standoff" attacks, which do not involve close-up confrontations between Coalition forces and insurgents. Rather, "such attacks typically consisted of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), small arms fire, and indirect weapons."[173]

- Figure 9.16 shows the average number of weekly attacks, according to the Department of Defense report. The text of the report noted that the average number of weekly "attacks"[174] increased by 15 percent in the period denoted "government established" (May 20–August 11, 2006) since the previous reporting period, denoted as "government transition" (February 11–May 19, 2006). However, the graph show an increase closer to 25 percent. The raw numbers, requested by reporters from the Associated Press and Reuters, indicated a 23.5-percent increase of average weekly attacks from the previous reporting period.[175] Weekly attack rates in July 2006 were flagged as the highest since the inception of the insurgency.



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, October 13, 2005; And subsequent updates: February, 2006, p.27; May 2006, p.32; August 2006, p. 33.

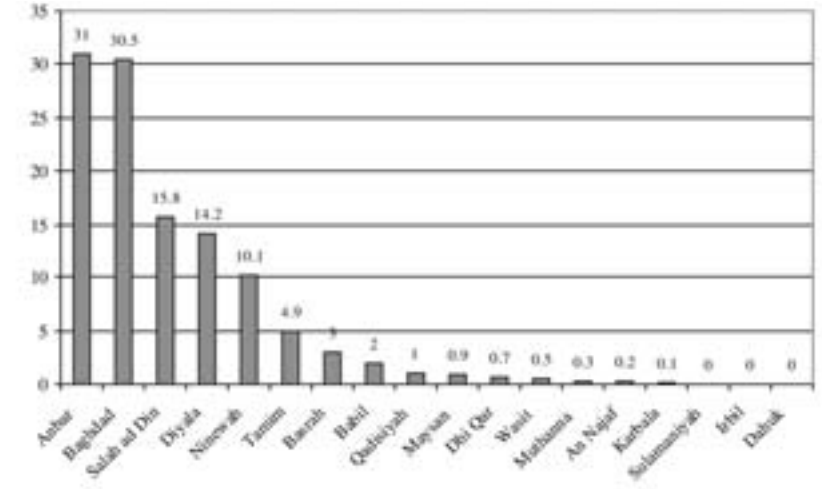
Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD reports.

Note: The May and August 2006 documents did not include a "Baseline" period.

Figure 9.16 Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004–August 2006

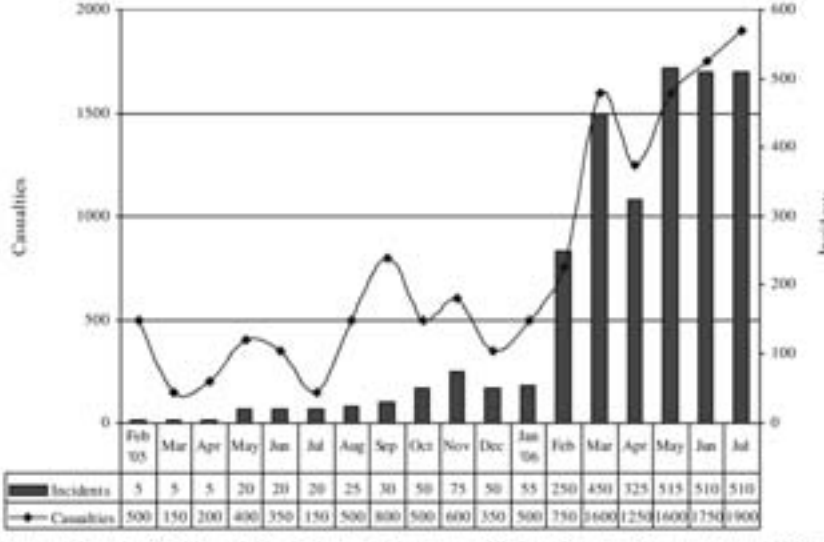
- Figure 9.17 shows total number of attacks by province. The majority of attacks were concentrated in four of Iraq's provinces—Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, and Salah ad Din. While these four provinces comprised around 37 percent of the population, the report noted, they accounted for 81 percent of all attacks. And Anbar and Baghdad, in particular, accounted for 55 percent of all attacks.
- The data on sectarian incidents in the report, depicted in Figure 9.18, showed a marked increase in the number of casualties and a steady heightened state of the number of incidents.

There were, however, serious problems with such "metrics." While the attack trends analysis provided in the August 2006 DoD Quarterly Report to Congress showed some improvement over past reporting—particularly in its assessment of the growing risk of civil war—the data were still limited by a number of shortcomings:



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p. 32. Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.

Figure 9.17 Total Attacks by Province: May–August 2006



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p. 35. Data points are estimates from the DoD report.

Figure 9.18 Sectarian Incidents: February 2006–July 2006

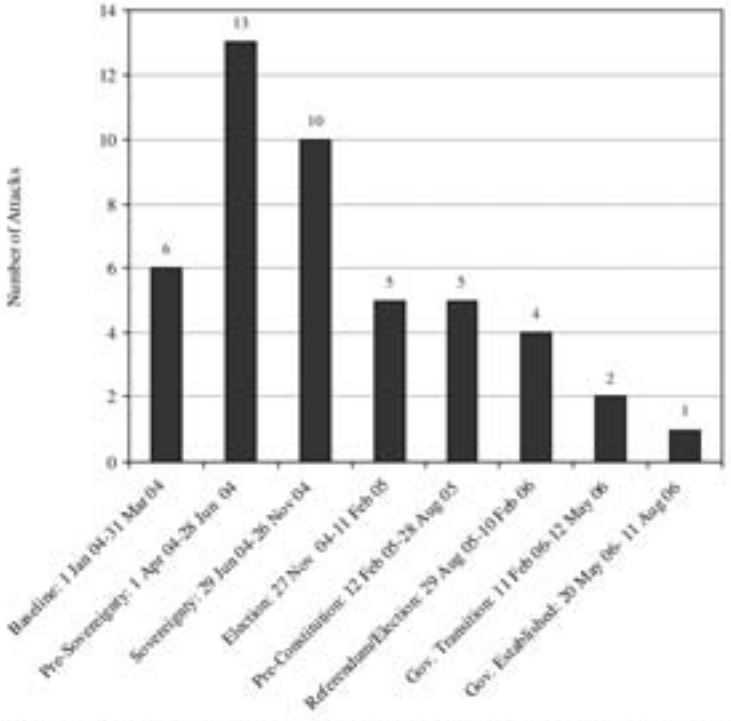
- *The variables were poorly defined, particularly in reference to what was counted as an "attack" and a "sectarian incident."* The text defined an attack as a specific incident reported in the MNC-I Significant Activities database, which included known attacks on Coalition forces, the ISF, the civilian population, and the infrastructure.[176] However, it appeared that these attacks were largely limited to incidents that could be clearly assigned to insurgents, thus overlooking broader patterns of sectarian and ethnic violence (such as disappearances, kidnappings, "mystery killings," and soft ethnic cleansing).

  Reporting in the DoD document that 63 percent of all attacks were directed toward Coalition forces suggested an emphasis on "insurgency," as opposed to "acts of civil war." Most other reporting indicated that Iraqis had become the primary target of attacks (including the graph on average daily casualties in the Quarterly Report, depicting an overwhelming ratio of Iraqi to Coalition casualties).

  The conceptualization of "sectarian incidents" was similarly left ambiguous in the report, and it was unclear how sectarian incidents were delineated from general attacks. More generally, it appeared that the Quarterly Report was averting acknowledgment of a significant development in Iraqi violence—that incidents of insurgency and civil war were blurring together.
- *This omission of clear numbers made it difficult to verify trend analyses and draw accurate conclusions from the data.* The apparent discrepancies between numbers provided in the text and those illustrated in the graphs on average weekly attacks, and average weekly attacks on infrastructure, signaled the need for supplying raw numbers in the report.
- *The lack of subcategories on the type and nature of attacks had the effect of oversimplifying dynamics of the fighting.* The main figure, for example, on average weekly attacks did not break down the type of attacks to account for shifts from Coalition to Iraqi security forces and civilian targets, although the text addressed this trend. The graph on sectarian incidents similarly did not include a breakdown by province, nor did it indicate whether incidents in Basra and Kirkuk were counted.

The August DoD report also claimed that there was a relatively steady decline in the weekly number of attacks on critical infrastructure, but there appeared to be a discrepancy on the rate of this decline over the past quarter. While the text indicated that the number of weekly attacks on infrastructure decreased from "an average of five per week to an average of two per week"[177] since the past reporting period, the accompanying graph, reproduced as Figure 9.19, showed that the number of attacks decreased from an average of two per week to an average of one per week.

In spite of this discrepancy, the report still made the point of noting that the relative decline in attacks on the infrastructure did not reflect their individual or collective impact. Rather, the decrease in numbers was "disproportionate" to their effect for a variety of reasons. Most significantly, the rate of repair to damage from past attacks was lagging. In addition, Iraqi officials were often slow in reacting to attacks and in initiating the appropriate repairs. And then, such repairs were often hampered by insurgent attacks or other criminal intimidation of maintenance workers. Therefore, the report concluded that "although the number of attacks is decreasing, the essential service infrastructure will continue to be a high-value target for enemy



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, February 2006, p. 28; and subsequent updates: May 2006, p.37, August 2006, p. 33.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.

Note: Averages rounded to the nearest whole number.

Figure 9.19 Average Weekly Attacks on Infrastructure: January 2004–August 2006

elements."[178] The analysis failed to suggest, however, that a decline in infrastructure attacks may also be a reflection of the fact that attackers were increasingly concentrating on targets designed to incite civil war.

IED, Vehicle-Borne IED, and Suicide Bombing Attacks

The patterns in insurgent attacks continued to shift and intensify. The frequency of IED attacks was generally considered a significant indicator of the evolving strength of the insurgency since setting up roadside bombs required a network of operatives including a bomb maker, financiers to fund the operation, and individuals who planted the explosives and set them off when the troops were approaching.[179]

The August 2006 Pentagon Quarterly Report to Congress on Iraq indicated that the number of car bombs increased in the period from May 20–August 11, 2006,

to levels last seen in the summer of 2004. According to the report, car bombs were largely centered on Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and the western Euphrates valley and were primarily directed toward civilians or Iraqi security force checkpoints.[180]

IED attacks increased by about four times their January 2004 levels by the late summer of 2006.[181] Explosive devices were responsible for slightly over half of the deaths of U.S. soldiers.[182] A total of 1,481 IED attacks were reported throughout Iraq in June, and 903 instances in which the bombs were found and neutralized, according to figures compiled by the American military in Baghdad. The figures marked a sharp increase since January, when there were 834 such attacks and 620 cases in which the bombs were found before they exploded.[183]

The number of IED attacks rose to 2,625 in July, of which 1,666 exploded and 959 were discovered and neutralized before they went off.[184] According to a spokesman for the military command in Baghdad, 70 percent of the 1,666 bombs that exploded in July targeted the American-led military force. Twenty percent were directed at Iraqi security forces, representing a 9-percent increase from 2005. And 10 percent of the bombs struck civilians, twice the rate from 2005.[185]

Around 1,200 IEDs were detonated in August, according to retired Army Gen. Montgomery Meigs, Head of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization. Meigs said that despite the increase in the number of roadside bombs, nearly half were found and neutralized before they exploded, and the number of casualties incurred from such explosions remained relatively constant before they edged upward in recent months.[186] "We're making slow, grudging progress," Meigs said, but forecast that his organization would "do better over time."[187]

The challenges U.S. efforts to curb the number of IED attacks now faced included the following:

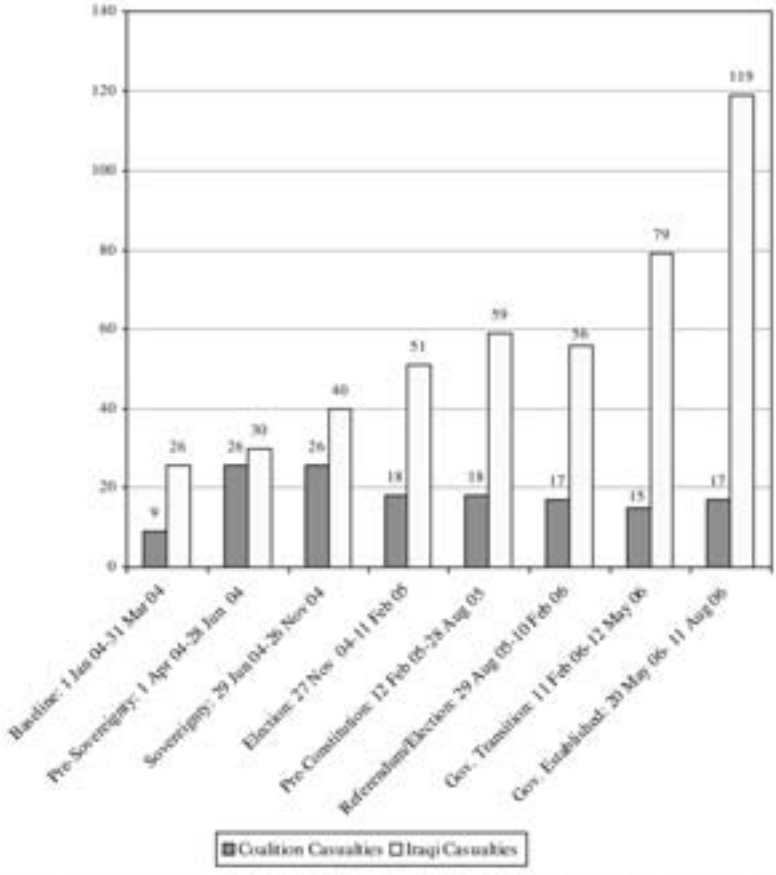
- A recent decline in the number of tips from Iraqis that the military could act upon, known as "actionable intelligence." While tips increased from 4,000 in January to a peak of 5,900 in April, they sharply declined in July to around 3,700.[188]
- The relatively widespread supply of artillery shells in the country, as well as an array of means to detonate them.[189]
- The adaptability of insurgents to revise their tactics. According to Meigs, insurgents change triggers for IEDs every six to nine months to stay ahead of U.S. military countermeasures.[190]

Meigs said that among the most lethal bombs were "explosively formed penetrators," which could penetrate through an inch of steel. He added that attacks aimed at the bottom of armored vehicles have increased, particularly in Sunni areas of Iraq, and in Baghdad where Coalition forces have concentrated their efforts to curb violence.

The Department of Defense was now arming around 30,000 Humvees with new armored doors and allocated $1.43 billion for jammers that disrupt electronic signals used to detonate bombs as part of its efforts to address the dangers of roadside bombs.[191]

U.S. and Iraqi Casualties

As was the case throughout the fighting, an increased U.S. combat role led to increased casualties. Operation Together Forward I and II put more U.S. troops on the streets, increasing the risk of death by small-arms fire and explosive devices. Casualty figures continued on roughly the same cyclical trend, however, because more attacks were now aimed at Iraqis. As Figure 9.20 shows, average daily Coalition



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, October 13, 2005, p.24; and subsequent updates: February 2006, p. 27, May 2006, p.33, August 2006, p. 32.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD reports.

Note: The data are derived from unverified initial reports submitted by Coalition elements responding to an incident. These numbers should be used for comparative purposes only. The May and August reports noted that ISF were included in the totals for Iraqi casualties.

Figure 9.20 Average Daily Casualties—Iraqi and Coalition: January 2004–August 2006

casualties were 17 in the summer of 2006 compared with 15 in the spring. According to the independent database Iraqi Coalition Casualties, 61 U.S. soldiers died in June 2006, 43 in July, and 65 in August. As mentioned above, IEDs now accounted for roughly half of all U.S. casualties.

Figure 9.20 also shows that Iraqi casualties increased by 51 percent compared to the previous quarter, making Iraqi casualties roughly seven times higher than Coalition casualties. Although 63 percent of attacks were reported to be directed toward Coalition forces, Iraqi security forces and civilians clearly incurred the majority of casualties.

According to figures obtained by the Associated Press, 1,006 Iraqis were reported killed in political or sectarian violence in June 2006, 885 of which were civilians. The overall number was down from the 1,053 deaths recorded in May. But despite the decrease in deaths, the number of Iraqis wounded went up to 1,769 in June, up from 1,426 in May. The AP tallies showed 5,062 Iraqis were killed and 6,898 were wounded in the first six months of 2006.[192]

In June 2006, the Iraqi government reported that more Baghdad residents were killed in shootings and other low-level attacks in May than in any previous month. Excluding bombings, 1,398 bodies were brought to the Baghdad morgue, 307 more than in April, according to the Ministry of Health and Statistics.[193] The following month, on July 3, the Associated Press reported that the Defense, Interior, and Health Ministries tallied the total number of deaths in June at 1,006.[194]

According to a report released by the UNAMI, "a total of 5,818 civilians were reportedly killed and at least 5,762 wounded during May and June."[195] The report, assessing conditions in Iraq over May and June, noted "insurgent, militia, and terrorist attacks continued unabated in many parts of Iraq, especially in Baghdad." It described humanitarian conditions across Iraq as follows:

> Killings, kidnappings and torture remain widespread. Fear resulting from these and other crimes continued to increase internal displacement and outflows of Iraqis to neighboring countries. The negative effect of violence on professional categories, targeted by sectarian and criminal violence or displaced as a result, coupled with inadequate provision of basic services, also affected the level of education and health care received by the population. Women, children and vulnerable groups, such as minorities, internally displaced and disabled persons continue to be directly affected by the violence and the ongoing impunity for human rights violations. Organized crime and corruption have persistently added to overall insecurity.[196]

The United Nations based its data relating to civilian casualties on tallies provided by the Ministry of Health, which tracked violent deaths recorded at hospitals around Iraq, and Baghdad's central morgue, where unidentified bodies were delivered. The report documented a general "upward trend" in civilian deaths since the summer of 2005. During the first six months of 2006, the death toll increased more than 77 percent from 1,778 in January to 3,149 in June.

According to the UN report,[197]

> [F]igures from the Ministry of Health, which included counts from hospitals in all Governorates[198] indicate that 1, 294 civilians died as a result of violence in May 2006 (among them 58 women and 17 children) and 2,687 were wounded (among them 178 women and 41 children). In June 2006 1,554 civilians died violently (among them 66 women and 30 children) and 3,075 were wounded (176 women and 58 children). The overwhelming majority of casualties were reported in Baghdad. In addition, the Medico-Legal Institute in Baghdad (MLI) separately reported receiving 1,375 unidentified bodies in May and 1,595 in June 2006. The total figure of civilians killed in Iraq, adding the figures provided by the Ministry of Health and the MLI, reaches 2,669 civilians in May and 3,149 in June 2006. According to the Ministry of Health, from January to June 2006, there were 6,826 civilians killed and 13,256 wounded.[199] Including the figures of the MLI in Baghdad for the period, the total civilians killed in Iraq from January-June 2006 was 14,338.[200]

The attacks included

> bombings and drive-by shootings, from indiscriminate attacks, in neighborhood markets or petrol stations, or following armed clashes with the police and the security forces. Civilians were also targeted or became unintended victims of insurgent or military actions. Terrorist acts against civilians have been aimed at fomenting sectarian violence or allegedly motivated by revenge and have targeted members of the Arab Shi'a and Sunni communities, including their cultural symbols, as well as markets in Shi'a neighborhoods. Collusion between criminal gangs, militias and sectarian "hit groups," alleged death squads, vigilante groups and religious extremists, adds further complexity to the situation. Certain neighborhoods in Baghdad often witness fighting among armed groups, police, and Special Forces. Execution-style killings continue to take place in the streets of Baghdad and other locations, most notably in Babil, Basra, Falluja, Karbala, Kirkuk, Mosul and Ramadi.

The numbers presented in the report were somewhat questionable, but were still considered "the most precise measurement of civilian deaths provided by any government organization since the invasion and represented a substantial increase over the figures in daily news media reports."[201] Indicating that an average of more than 100 civilians per day were killed in Iraq in June, at the time of its reporting, the death tally was considered the highest official tally of violent deaths since the fall of Baghdad.[202]

At best, this set of official figures captured a physical count only of the bodies that were turned in, omitting the many dead that never made it to a morgue or hospital. Consequently, official casualty tallies tended to underreport the scope and intensity of the violence in Iraq and often overemphasize attacks that occurred in places that are widely covered, such as Baghdad.

The Ministry of Health stated on June 25 that the Iraqi death toll since 2003 exceeded 50,000—a toll that was around 20,000 more than estimates announced by the Bush administration.[203] The deaths recorded by the Ministry of Health indicated that about 75 percent of those who died violently died in "terrorist acts," typically bombings. The other 25 percent of the deaths were classified as "military

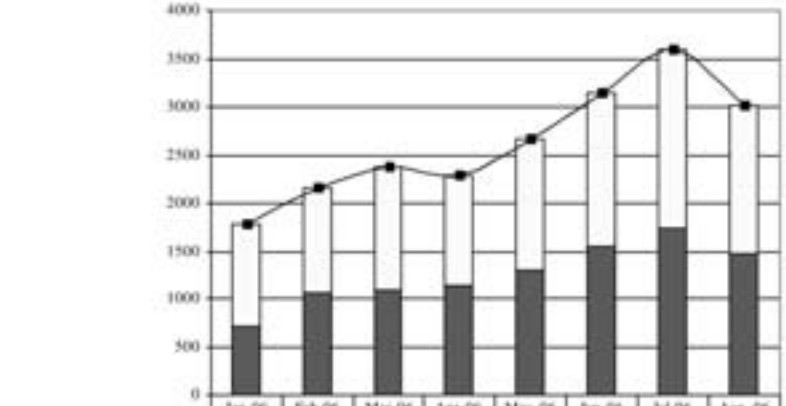
clashes," or incidents in which "innocent bystanders" were shot by Iraqi or American troops, in crossfire, or accidentally at checkpoints.[204]

Notably, the classifications by the Ministry of Health did not include deaths caused by crime-related activities, which likely contributed to a significant number of those killed. This oversight was probably a reflection of vague documentation, or more likely it was an indication that the distinction between homicide and sectarian violence had become increasingly blurred.

The morgue records showed that most of the casualties were civilians, as opposed to combatants, or security forces. According to morgue officials, "the vast majority of bodies processed had been shot execution-style. Many showed signs of torture—drill holes, burns, missing eyes and limbs. Others had been strangled, beheaded, stabbed or beaten to death."[205]

Civilian casualties rose again in July. According to figures released by the Iraqi Health Ministry and the Baghdad morgue shown in Figure 9.21, an average of more than 110 Iraqis were killed each day in July, and the total number of civilian deaths was 3,438 that month, representing a 9-percent increase since June. When the July tally was added to official figures reported in earlier months (collected by the United Nations), the total indicated that at least 17,776 Iraqi civilians died violently since the beginning of 2006, an average of 2,539 civilians per month.[206]

The Baghdad morgue reported receiving 1,855 bodies in July.[207] According to the facility's assistant manager, Abdul Razzaq al-Obeidi, roughly 90 percent had died



	Jan-06	Feb-06	Mar-06	Apr-06	May-06	Jun-06	Jul-06	Aug-06
Baghdad Central Morgue	1068	1110	1294	1155	1375	1595	1855	1536
Ministry of Health	710	1055	1084	1129	1294	1554	1735	1473
Total Civilian Casualties	1778	2165	2378	2284	2669	3149	3590	3009

Source: UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, "Human Rights Report: 1 May-30 June 2006; 1 July-31 August 2006; Kir Semple, "Iraqi Death Toll Rises Above 100 Per Day, U.N. Says," *New York Times*, July 19, 2006.

Figure 9.21 Civilian Casualties Reported by Baghdad Central Morgue and Iraqi Ministry of Health: January–August 2006

violently,[208] the majority of which had gunshot wounds in their heads—often an indication of death squad assassinations.[209]

While the Iraqi Health Ministry did not release figures on the number of civilians wounded by attacks in Baghdad in July, the Ministry reported that at least 3,597 Iraqis were wounded that month outside the city, representing a 25-percent increase since June.[210] Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., attributed 60 percent of the killings to Shi'-ite death squads and the rest to attacks by al-Qai'da and related groups.[211]

In August, the Baghdad morgue received 1,535 bodies, representing a 17-percent decrease from July to levels near those recorded in June.[212] The decrease was expected to be greater, but a lull in violence in early August was followed by a sharp upsurge later in the month.

TRANSFERRING CONTROL TO IRAQI FORCES

The ability of Iraqi forces also affected the level of violence. Coalition forces formally handed over control of the southern Iraqi province of Muthanna to Iraqi forces on July 13, which became the first province placed entirely under Iraqi authority. In a joint statement, General Casey and U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said, "The handover represents a milestone in the successful development of Iraq's capability to govern and protect itself as a sovereign and democratic nation."[213] Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki described the transfer as an important step in the process of transferring all 18 provinces to Iraqi authorities by the end of 2007.[214]

U.S. military commanders handed over lead security control of Salahuddin, Nineveh, and Tamin provinces to the Iraqi Army's 4th Division on August 8, 2006. The territory extended from the foothills of Iraq's eastern territory west to the Syrian border. While Iraqi forces would still need to depend on the U.S. military for intelligence, logistical assistance, and heavy artillery, the transfer handed off to Iraqis "primary responsibility for coordinating, planning, and conducting security operations in the three-province area."[215]

On the day of the security handover, Iraq's National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie announced that "half of the Iraqi army [was] now under control of Iraqis," and added, "We believe they will be much more competent in fighting terrorism."[216] General Casey applauded the development and said, "First we had to build and train them. Then we put them in the lead, and we'll ultimately help them become independent."[217]

These transfers of security control to Iraqi forces did represent some real-world success, but the ISF in fact remained dependent on U.S. support and forces for virtually every aspect of its activities, and U.S. efforts in Iraq overshadowed the significance of these gains. According to a report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) submitted to Congress in July, "even as the number and capabilities of Iraqi security forces have increased, overall security conditions have deteriorated, as evidenced by attack trends, sectarian violence, and the growth and influence of militias."[218]

While security control of the three-province area of Salahuddin, Nineveh, and Tamin was being handed over to Iraqi forces, more American troops were being deployed in the capital as part of the second phase of Operation Together Forward, implemented to curb sectarian violence in Baghdad. Such developments cast doubt on a linchpin of the current U.S. strategy in Iraq—that training more Iraqi forces would allow American troops to return home.

THE FUEL CRISIS

Once again, the trend toward more intense civil conflict also had economic causes. Corruption and insurgent attacks on pipelines contributed to the severity of the fuel crisis in Baghdad, where the price of black-market fuel reached as much as $4 per gallon in August 2006.[219] At that time, President Jalal Talabani said, "I realize that people are really suffering from the lack of energy and security, but this is not the fault of the government. . . Terrorists have blown up many power stations as well as the pipeline" that delivers crude oil from the northern fields around Kirkuk to the main refinery in Beiji, located 155 miles north of Baghdad.[220]

Oil ministry spokesperson Assem Jihad said that the Beiji facility had a capacity to refine 2 million to 2.25 million gallons of gasoline per day during the prewar period, but had dropped to production levels of less than 260,000 gallons of gasoline per day. He attributed this decline primarily to electricity shortages and threats to refinery operators.[221]

The oil crisis was compounded by a burgeoning black market and widespread theft and corruption. In 2005, 450 Oil Ministry employees were dismissed for illegally selling oil and petroleum products. According to the Oil Ministry's inspector general, Ali-al-Alaak, roughly $4 billion worth of petroleum products were smuggled out of Iraq that year, including gasoline and crude oil siphoned from pipelines.[222]

The August 2006 DoD Quarterly Report to Congress identified four primary factors limiting production at the Beiji refinery: (1) maintenance issues with key components in the refinery, (2) an inefficient refining process, (3) an unreliable flow of crude oil into the refinery, and (4) security threats to personnel.[223]

In early August, the main oil facility in Latifiyah was forced to shut down after workers received death threats. According to the Oil Ministry, more than 250 Oil Ministry officials, workers, and security guards had been killed since the ousting of Saddam Hussein. And the U.S. Energy and Information Administration estimated 315 major attacks on pipelines, electricity plants, and other energy infrastructure in the period from April 2003 to June 2006.

The August 2006 Pentagon Quarterly Report to Congress acknowledged that "poor maintenance, insurgent attacks, slow repair, and corruption have slowed progress" in efforts to rebuild Iraq's energy infrastructure. "Beyond attacks on various worksites," the report noted, "terrorists have attacked crude export and petroleum product pipelines, impeding exports and the refining and distribution of petroleum products, such as gasoline and diesel."[224] In spite of these setbacks, the report noted that crude oil production increased by 18 percent since the previous reporting period

to 2.2 million barrels per day (mbpd), but did not reach the Iraqi government's target level of 2.5 mbpd.

The report warned that an oversubsidization of fuel, with regular gasoline regulated at $0.55 per gallon, and premium gasoline at $0.90 per gallon, led to a "disconnect between supply and demand," feeding black market activity and corruption.[225] However, the DoD document failed to address critical issues pertaining to the oil industry including field management and development, war flooding, and crude oil injection and overproduction.

In his July 11 testimony before the House Government Subcommittee meeting, David M. Walker, head of the GAO, said that roughly 10 percent of Iraq's refined fuels and 30 percent of its imported fuels were stolen. He partially attributed widespread theft in the industry to the oversubsidization of fuels that "[provided] tremendous incentives" for corruptive practices.[226]

THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE STATES: CONTINUING ALLEGATIONS OF IRANIAN INTERFERENCE

By summer 2006 it was clear that the Shi'a in both Iran and Iraq were more concerned about any return of Sunni power than the two countries' previous differences. The flow of pilgrims from Iran to Shi'ite holy sites in Najaf and Karbala in 2006 further strengthened ties between the two countries.

Some U.S. planners had assumed that the new Shi'ite-dominated government in Baghdad would challenge Tehran, and clerics in Najaf would challenge Ayatollah Khomeini in Qom; however, trade increased substantially between the two countries, and clerics in Iraq did not speak out against Iranian politics, for fear of disrupting the newfound Shi'ite unity in the region. The continued Sunni insurgency also presented a common threat that unified rather than divided Tehran and Baghdad, particularly at a time when support for the United States was falling and attacks on Shi'ite militias were rising. Both countries clearly understood that security of the region was paramount.[227]

Major General Caldwell's assertion that "Shia extremist groups have received training through some sort of third element associated with Iraq" re-emerged in mid-August amid a growing confrontation between the United States and the Mahdi Army, and rising tensions between the United States and Iran over Iran's support for Hezbollah.[228]

Major General Caldwell, however, was cautious in his statements. He did not allege that the Iranian government was directly involved in supporting Shi'ite militias, or that Iranian operatives were in Iraq, but rather Caldwell deliberately focused his statements on the role of proxy groups in providing weaponry and training to Shi'ites. He said, "There's nothing that we have definitely found to say that there are any Iranians operating within the country of Iraq, but rather some clear surrogate elements have been doing this. . . We do believe that some Shi'ite elements have been in Iran receiving training. But the degree to which this is known and endorsed by the

government of Iran is uncertain."[229] Caldwell also refrained from identifying which Shi'ite groups Iran was implicated in supporting.

Officials from the Badr organization and the Mahdi Army denied any such allegations. Abdul Hadi al-Daraji, a Sadr spokesman, said, "Usually such statements of the United States of America come after they have proven their incapability to control the security situation in Iraq . . . This is unrealistic. The Iraqis are not followers of Iran."[230]

In August *Chatham House* released a report on Iran in which it asserted, "The great problem facing the US is that Iran has superseded it as the most influential power in Iraq." The report argued that Iran had great influence in the south since "every Shi'a party in Iraq now has strong links with Tehran." In addition to this influence, Iran also exerted pressure in the north because of its concerns about controlling the Kurdish situation. The report suggested that Iran's increased importance in the region meant that while the Iraqi government would continue to formally adhere to U.S. wishes, it would have to begin to take more actions aimed at appeasing Iran.[231]

Iraq's Insurgency and the Road to Civil Conflict

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with assistance from Emma R. Davies

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Chronology of Major Events in Iraq: May 1, 2003–June 2007

April–May 2003	There is widespread looting in Baghdad and a sharp increase in low-level criminal activity. The U.S. military does not have sufficient forces to control the breakdown in security. The lack of a phase IV plan becomes apparent.
May 1, 2003	President George W. Bush declares an end to major combat operations in Iraq.
May 12, 2003	Ambassador L. Paul Bremer arrives in Iraq and establishes the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). He replaces Ret. Lt. Gen. Jay Garner, head of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance for Iraq. Soon after arriving Bremer issues CPA Order Number 1, De-Ba'athification of Iraq, and CPA Order Number 2, Dissolution of Entities.
Summer 2003	The United States denies that the insurgency is a guerrilla war and emphasizes that the attacks come from former regime elements and "bitter enders." USCENTCOM (United States Central Command) Commander Gen. Tommy Franks retires, and Gen. John Abizaid takes command. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez becomes commander of U.S. forces in Iraq.
August 7, 2003	A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens.
August 19, 2003	A truck bomb explodes outside UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing 24 people, including the head of the UN

mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello. More than 100 are injured. The dead also include the Iraqi coordinator for the UN children's fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers. This attack, and the attack on the Jordanian Embassy, was later attributed to al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia associates.

November 15, 2003 The CPA and the Iraqi Governing Council reach an agreement on the "November 15 Document" that outlines a timeline for transition to Iraqi sovereignty.

December 13, 2003 Saddam Hussein is captured by American troops. The former dictator is found hiding in a hole near Tikrit, his hometown. He surrenders without a fight.

March 2, 2004 In the bloodiest day in Iraq since the end of combat operations, at least five bombs explode near Shi'ite religious ceremonies in Baghdad and Karbala, as hundreds of thousands of pilgrims pack the streets for the Ashura ceremony. At least 270 people die; 573 are wounded. It isa the first time Shi'ites are permitted to observe the holy day since the Ba'athists had taken power.

March 8, 2004 The Iraqi Governing Council reaches an agreement on an interim constitution, called the Transitional Administrative Law.

March 31, 2004 Four Blackwater USA security guards are killed in Fallujah, helping to trigger fighting between U.S. forces and insurgents in the Sunni Arab city that lasts through April. These clashes are often called the "First Battle of Fallujah."

April 4, 2004 The followers of Moqtada al-Sadr, a militant Shi'ite cleric espousing fiercely anti-American rhetoric, march through at least six Iraqi cities, seizing control of the area around Kufa and killing nine Coalition troops—seven in Sadr City alone. The violence began when demonstrations supporting Sadr and his deputy, who was arrested the previous day, clashed with Coalition forces in Najaf and in Sadr City. Clashes last until June.

June 28, 2004 The CPA transfers sovereignty to Iraq. Ayad Allawi becomes the interim Prime Minister. Soon after, Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., replaces General Sanchez as commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, and John D. Negroponte, formally the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, replaces Bremer as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq.

October 23, 2004 In the single deadliest insurgent ambush to date, guerrillas dressed as police officers execute 49 newly trained Iraqi soldiers on a remote road in eastern Iraq. The unarmed soldiers stopped at a fake checkpoint while returning home after

completing training with U.S. forces. The incident supports assertions that insurgents have infiltrated the Iraqi security infrastructure. Two days later, Prime Minister Allawi blames Coalition forces for leaving the Iraqis vulnerable to attack.

November 8, 2004 U.S. troops move into Fallujah, engaging in intense fighting with insurgents for over a week. Most of the insurgents involved are either killed or captured. This fighting is often called the "Second Battle of Fallujah."

January 30, 2005 Nationwide elections take place for a National Assembly that was tasked with writing a draft constitution. Most provinces also held elections for provincial councils. The majority of Sunnis boycotted the election. Violence had steadily increased leading up to the elections.

May 2005 A tape attributed to al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi effectively declares war against the Shi'ites in Iraq.

June 21, 2005 Zalmay Khalilzad is sworn in as the new U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, replacing Negroponte.

September 14, 2005 A dozen bombings in nine hours rock Baghdad, killing more than 150 Iraqis and wounding several hundred. It is Baghdad's worst day of bloodshed since the war began. The deadliest attack occurs in the Khadamiya district, a Shi'ite neighborhood in northern Baghdad, when an insurgent detonated his van near a crowd of day laborers, killing 112 and wounding 200 more.

October 15, 2005 Iraqis vote in a "yes" or "no" referendum to accept the draft constitution. Sunnis overwhelmingly reject the draft, but it passes with Shi'ite and Kurdish support.

December 15, 2005 Iraq holds nationwide elections for a permanent government. There are a few incidents involving light violence, but no major attacks. Sunni participation is much higher than in the January election. The Shi'ite coalition, the United Iraqi Alliance, wins the majority of seats in the proportional representation election and has the responsibility to select a prime minister. Ibrahim al-Ashaiqir al-Jaafari continues on in that position as the various Shi'ite parties debate.

January 2006 The Mujahedeen Shura Council, an insurgent umbrella group that unifies several neo-Salafi elements under the leadership of al-Qa'ida, is created.

February 22, 2006 The 1,200-year-old Shi'ite Askariya shrine in Samarra, Iraq, is attacked. The bombing destroys the golden-domed shrine, which was one of the most sacred for Iraqi Shi'ites. Al-Qa'ida

in Iraq claims responsibility for the attack. This sets off an unprecedented spasm of sectarian violence. At least 47 bodies of both Shi'ites and Sunnis are found across Iraq the following day, and dozens of Sunni mosques are attacked.

March 2, 2006 U.S. Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch confirms that since the Golden Mosque bombing there have been 33 attacks on mosques, with two destroyed and seven sustaining significant damage, 319 Iraqi civilians have been killed in street violence, and 21 protests have taken place with over 1,000 people, the majority of which were peaceful.

May 20, 2006 The government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki takes power. A bomb explodes in Sadr City, killing 19 and wounding 58. In Qaim, 25 Sunni farmers are seized by a Shi'ite militia in reprisal attacks. These types of retaliatory killings are typical after the Samarra mosque bombing. Between 10 and 40 Iraqis continue to be found dead on the streets in Iraq daily.

June 7, 2006 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is killed in a U.S. airstrike in Diyala Province. Abu Ayyub al-Masri is named his successor shortly thereafter.

June 14, 2006 U.S. and Iraqi forces commence Operation Forward Together in Baghdad. This operation consists of about 70,000–75,000 men.

October 2006 The "Islamic State of Iraq," an extension of the Mujahedeen Shura Council that claims territory in Sunni-dominated Iraq, is created.

The "National Awakening Council" is formed in Anbar by tribal sheiks who seek to form an alliance with Coalition forces against al-Qa'ida.

January 10, 2007 President Bush and Prime Minister al-Maliki announce a "New Way Forward" in Iraq. The new strategy includes sending some 20,000 additional U.S. troops to Iraq, the majority of which will be "surged" to Baghdad. Soon after, Gen. David H. Petraeus takes command of Multinational Force–Iraq (MNF-I) from General Casey; Adm. William J. Fallon takes command of CENTCOM, replacing General Abizaid; and Ryan Crocker becomes the new U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, replacing Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad.

February 13, 2007 The Baghdad security plan, or "Operation Fardh al-Qanoon," is initiated, although the full U.S. "surge" strength does not arrive until June.

June 2007 U.S. and Iraqi troops are deployed to areas surrounding Baghdad and throughout the country in what becomes

known as "Operation Phantom Thunder." The operations are meant to eliminate car-bomb factories and insurgent cells in the Baghdad "belt." Operation Phantom Thunder includes Operation Fardh al-Qanoon in Baghdad, Operation Arrowhead Ripper in Diyala, and Operation Marne Torch in Maysan.

U.S. and Iraqi troops recruit tribal groups and local insurgents to fight against al-Qa'ida throughout the country.

Source: UN, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2004.

Map of Iraq

Iraq's Insurgency and the Road to Civil Conflict

10

The Sectarian and Ethnic War for Control of Space: Fall 2006–January 9, 2007

September 13, 2006	Police find the bodies of 65 men who have been tortured, shot, and dumped; most are found around Baghdad in Sunni Arab areas.
October 2006	The "Islamic State of Iraq," an extension of the Mujahedeen Shura Council that claims territory in Sunni-dominated Iraq for Sunni Arab neo-Salafi insurgents, is created.
November 14, 2006	Gunmen wearing Iraqi police uniforms kidnap as many as 100 people from a Ministry of Higher Education building in central Baghdad.
November 23, 2006	Up to six car bombs kill 202 people and wound 250 people in Sadr City in Baghdad.
December 9, 2006	Shi'ite militias attack Sunni homes in Baghdad's Hurriya district. More than 30 families flee after the militias torch homes and kill at least one person. This type of "soft" sectarian cleansing further separates Iraq on ethnic and sectarian lines.
December 17, 2006	Gunmen in police uniforms kidnap at least 25 people at a Red Crescent office in Baghdad.
December 21, 2006	A record number of 76 bodies are found in Baghdad.
December 26, 2006	In one of the largest British military operations since the 2003 invasion, a joint British-Iraqi force captured a police station in Basra, freeing 127 prisoners held by criminal and militia elements that had infiltrated the local police force and committed acts of sectarian violence.
December 30, 2006	Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was executed by hanging for crimes against humanity at the Kadhimiya Iraqi

> Army Base in northern Baghdad, sparking both celebrations among Shi'ites and Sunni outrage. The execution was followed by a car bombing in the predominantly Shi'ite town of Al-Kufa, killing at least 30 civilians, while another 25 people were killed by three car bombs in Baghdad's mixed Al-Hurriyah neighborhood.

By the fall of 2006, the map of sectarian and ethnic violence was far broader than the major incidents of violence reported by the Multi-National Forces–Iraq (MNF-I) and the Iraqi government. There were no accurate or reliable counts of such dead and wounded because they could not be counted with any reliability even in the Baghdad area. However, a count kept by the Associated Press estimated that 13,738 Iraqis—civilians and security forces—died violently in 2006. The UN reported that 34,452 Iraqi civilians died in 2006. Groups like Iraq Body Count reported that a total of roughly 56,000 Iraqi civilians had died since 2003. At the extremes, a *Lancet* study based on a highly uncertain methodology and sampling method estimated that 655,000 Iraqis had died since 2003.[1]

Tragic as such casualty estimates were, they were only part of this story. Other forms of "cleansing" became at least as important as major overt acts of violence. Intelligence maps of Baghdad and other major cities with mixed populations showed a steady separation of the population on sectarian and ethnic lines. Shi'ites and Sunnis, and Arabs and Kurds, sought to dominate the other side or push the weaker side out of areas where they had the majority or had superior power. These forms of "soft" ethnic cleansing included threats, physical intimidation, blackmail, seizure of property, raids on homes and businesses, use of checkpoints, kidnappings and extortion, misuse of government offices and police, and disappearances.

One measure of the level of conflict that went beyond the data on killings was the number of refugees. At the end of 2006, the UN reported that there were 1.7 million internally displaced Iraqis since 2003, with an average of 45,000 Iraqis leaving their homes every month.

Sectarian and ethnic divisions had now expanded from struggles by extremists and activists to actions by popular movements that were acquiring a steadily broader base. While most Iraqis still expressed support for national unity in public opinion polls, the base for violence and cleansing expanded to include more and more of the population in areas where there was sectarian and ethnic tension and violence. This was particularly true where militias and local security forces provided the only real local security, where young men had little employment, and where the struggle for control of villages, cities, and neighborhoods had become a struggle for housing, businesses, and the ability to conduct a normal life.

On the political front, the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki failed to make serious progress in reconciliation. Al-Maliki continued to pursue a political solution to the crisis and indicated he would seek to control the Shi'ite militias, including that of Muqtada al-Sadr. The prime minister, and other key leaders, however, placed most of the blame for Iraq's civil violence on the Sunni insurgents, clearly

favored the Shi'ite cause, and were openly less optimistic about reconciliation than they had been in the past. Tensions between Sunni and Shi'ite legislators remained heightened as both sects accused each other of propagating sectarian killings by supporting death squads.

Sadr's bloc boycotted parliament from mid-December until late January, and Sadr loyalists demonstrated against the U.S. and Iraqi operations aimed at Mahdi Army members. Al-Maliki did announce the cabinet positions that would be reshuffled, which included Health, Transportation, Culture, Woman's Affairs, and Tourism. Members of the Iraqi parliament also stated that they were near a compromise on the crucial oil law.

According to polls included in the Department of Defense (DOD) August–November report on "Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq," Iraqi public opinion became steadily more doubtful of the government's ability to improve security conditions. The degree to which respondents felt safe was related to the sectarian composition of their province; citizens in mixed areas such as Baghdad and Mosul were less likely to feel safe than individuals in Maysan Province.

The United States did continue to hand over "control" of security operations to Iraqi security forces, but this had little overall impact on the insurgency and sometimes was still more cosmetic than real. The original target goal for Iraqi security forces, 325,000, was reached, but many had deserted, were on unauthorized leave, were not operational, or had died in the violence. Al-Maliki authorized the addition of at least 30,000 forces. U.S. and Iraqi officials also announced an initiative to rein in the 150,000-man Facilities Protection Service, which had Shi'ite sectarian alliances. The British faced a setback in training efforts in Basra where they raided and disbanded the Serious Crimes Unit. However, police recruiting in Anbar Province soared as Sunni Arab tribes agreed to provide local security against insurgents in key cities such as Ramadi and Fallujah.

The widespread violence in the country also made economic conditions continue to deteriorate for many, if not most, Iraqis. Iraqis faced a severe fuel crisis, joblessness, high inflation rates, and a burgeoning black market. Oil production remained below preinvasion levels and electricity averaged less than five hours a day in Baghdad.[2] Education, health care, and the rule of law continued to suffer.

INCHING TOWARD NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

Iraqi legislators still pursued their own sectarian and ethnic agendas and found little area for compromise. Sunni and some "nationalist" Shi'ite parties opposed any laws allowing the creation of autonomous regions, but the Kurds and many Shi'ite leaders supported some form of federation. Prime Minister al-Maliki took a public stance against sectarian militias, but little action followed his rhetoric. Reports surfaced of further Shi'ite militia infiltration into the security forces and direct political support. Similarly, Shi'ite politicians accused Sunnis of supporting insurgents and al-Qa'ida in Iraq.

The ministries of the government increasingly divided their personnel and spending efforts along sectarian and ethnic lines and often by party. Similar favoritism, purges, and control of spending affected government activity at the governorate and local levels, compounded by massive corruption, nepotism, and personal favoritism.

The August–November Department of Defense Report on Stability and Security in Iraq noted some progress in the Iraqi parliament by the end of 2006, but was also grimly realistic in its assessment:

> The Council of Representatives [CoR] has made progress in several areas, including approving the Executive Procedures to Form Regions Law, passing the Investment Law, and forming a Constitutional Review Committee. There is a notable tendency for the Government of Iraq to delay making difficult decisions. Political parties boycott CoR sessions where agendas include topics that they do not want discussed or voted on. There are still many outstanding issues, including legislation on the enactment of a High Independent Electoral Commission Law; Provincial Election Commission Law; Hydrocarbon Law; de-Ba'athification Reform Law; Flag, Emblem and National Anthem Law; and Amnesty, Militias, and other Armed Formations Law.[3]

The Department of Defense report characterized the political stalemate as follows:

> Personal loyalties to various sub-national groups, such as tribe, sect, or political party, are often stronger than loyalty to Iraq as a nation-state. In addition, Iraq's political parties are often unwilling or unable to resolve conflicts through compromise. Further, some Iraqis have joined the political process but condone or maintain support for violent means as a source of political leverage. This makes effective national reconciliation and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs difficult to design and implement . . .
>
> A negotiated, realistic timetable for transition to security self-reliance could allow the government of Iraq to take responsibility for its political development, economy, and security, without threatening or unnecessarily risking the gains made so far. Such a timetable could lead to changes in the political dynamic in Iraq, providing support for the government's own long-term vision: a united, federal, and democratic country, at peace with its neighbors and itself.[4]

In a November 15, 2006, address to the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Gen. Michael Hayden, laid out the political ambitions of Iraq's three main sectarian groups:[5]

- The Shi'a today now focus on assuring that Iraq's new government reflects the will of the majority Shi'a population, making sure that the Ba'athists never regain power.
- Sunnis, on the other hand, view the Shi'a as Iranian controlled and the current government as predatory—or at least many Sunnis do.
- The Kurds, for their part, want to keep and strengthen the substantial autonomy they have exercised for more than a decade.

The Iraqi government did make further efforts toward conciliation, but most were futile. A two-day National Reconciliation Conference began on December 16, 2006, but key groups were absent. Muqtada al-Sadr and his bloc refused an invitation, and no one representing Sunni insurgents was present. Thus calls for peace and compromise did not resonate on the streets, and none of the attending parties produced any new ideas about how to combat the violence. Al-Maliki did invite members of the Ba'athi Army to join the Iraqi security forces, but it seemed unlikely that the conference would have much effect.[6] At the start of 2007, which U.S. officials dubbed "the year of transition," the Iraqi government still faced all the serious challenges to its authority and ability to unite the country it had faced on the day it came to office.

Growing Divides: Segregating the Country

The issue of federalism remained another key issue dividing Iraq's political leadership and the country. Throughout August and September, the leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, called for legislation that would enable provinces to form semiautonomous states. He was particularly adamant about the need for the provinces to control their own security and petroleum resources. He advocated for a Shi'ite state in southern Iraq that would include eight provinces and much of Iraq's oil wealth. Sunni leaders, out of fear of being marginalized to resource-poor central Iraq, accused Shi'a of going back on their 2005 promise to form a parliamentary committee to discuss the issues.

In contrast, the leader of the main Sunni bloc, Adnan al-Dulaimi, called for "all Iraqis—whether Sunni, Shi'ite, Arab, Kurd, Turkomen, Muslim or Christian—to stand against this scheme."[7] Officials from the secular coalition and the coalition loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr echoed his voice of dissension.[8] The Shi'ite deputy speaker argued, "The system we agreed to after the collapse of Saddam's regime is a regional system, and there is no turning back from this principle because it represents the will of 12 million Iraqi voters."[9]

In a visible display of such dissent, a bloc of Sunni, Shi'ite, and secular groups boycotted parliament on September 12, 2006, in protest of the federalism plan. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani urged the Shi'ite party in favor, SCIRI, to stop forcing the issue in parliament in order to prevent the collapse of the tenuous government.[10]

On October 11, 2006, parliament passed the law that would allow for the creation of federal regions, but delayed any vote on the creation of autonomous zones until 2008. Sunni and opposition Shi'ite parties boycotted the session to try and prevent the law from passing, but the remaining 140 legislators passed all 200 provisions unanimously. The law allowed different provinces to join together to form autonomous regions with their own powers. All provinces wishing to join an autonomous region would hold a referendum at the request of at least a third of the provincial legislators.[11] The leader of the Sunni National Accordance Front, Adnan al-Dulaimi, said, "This is the beginning of the plan to divide Iraq[12] An International

Crisis Group analysis summarized the problem of segregating the country into autonomous regions in a December 19, 2006, report:

> Despite significant population displacement, much of Iraq's population still lives in areas that are at least until recently were profoundly inter-mixed, due to labor migration, forced resettlement under past regimes and widespread inter-marriage across ethnic, confessional and tribal lines. These remain contact zones between various ethnic and confessional groups.
>
> If there are ethnically or religiously "pure" areas at all, they are often minority islands in a sea of people of a different primary identity, such as the Sunni Arab groups in many cities that have majority populations (for example, Basra), the Shi'ite towns and villages north of Baghdad that are surrounded by Sunnis, and the Sunni Arab towns south of Baghdad on the road from the capital to the Shi'ites' holiest shrines in Karbala and Najaf. One deeply contested area is the wide mixed-population belt stretching from the Syrian border in north western Iraq to the Iranian border east of Baghdad, where various ethnic and religious communities vie for survival, political control and access to the rich oil deposits underneath.
>
> In such a mosaic, no simple lines can be drawn to distinguish one community from another, or at least not without major violence between groups, within groups and even within families.[13]

Growing Frustration with the al-Maliki Government

Sunni frustration with the al-Maliki government had become more serious, and the issue of dividing the country was only one issue in a long list. Sunni legislators warned, "If we Sunnis remain in the condition we're in now, we'll be finished. If the zero hour is coming, we will take the decisions we need to defend ourselves."[14]

Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi proposed several recommendations for progress in Iraq in a speech at the United States Institute for Peace on December 14, 2006. Politically, he said that many of the problems in Iraq's parliament came from the vague constitution. He stated the he had signed the document with the understanding that many of the issues would be debated further in parliament and amendments would be added, but he found that those discussions were superficial.

U.S. officials also made it clear they doubted whether Prime Minister al-Maliki had the "political will to weed out official corruption and tackle the brutal militias that were threatening to plunge Iraq into civil war."[15] U.S. military officials stated that they wanted al-Maliki to take the lead in addressing the militia problem, but that if he did not address it soon, the United States would need to step in and exert more pressure. It was unclear exactly what type of pressure that would be. The U.S. military said that sectarian violence and the risk of civil war would not recede unless the Iraqi government tackled the militia problem.[16]

A memo written by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley and acquired by the *New York Times* expressed doubts that Prime Minister al-Maliki would be able to "rise above the sectarian agendas being promoted by others." Hadley stated that the opposition al-Maliki had shown the United States and the Coalition in the fall was

perhaps an attempt by the prime minister to show his strength to Iraqis. The memo cited several principal concerns about the national reconciliation government that all pointed to consolidation of Shia power in Baghdad:[17]

- Reports of nondelivery of services to Sunni areas,
- Intervention by the prime minister's office to stop military action against Shia targets and to encourage them against Sunni ones,
- Removal of Iraq's most effective leaders on a sectarian basis,
- Efforts to ensure Shia majorities in all ministries, and
- Escalation of Jaish al-Mahdi killings.

Hadley was also concerned that the information that al-Maliki received was incomplete because of "his small circle of Da'wa advisers, coloring his actions and interpretation of reality. . . The reality on the streets of Baghdad suggests Maliki is either ignorant of what is going on, misrepresenting his intentions, or that his capabilities are not yet sufficient to turn his good intentions into action."[18] Key U.S. officials increasingly warned about a breakdown in the Iraqi government. In a report to Congress on November 15, 2006, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lt. Gen. Michael D. Maples, said, "Although a significant breakdown of central authority has not occurred, Iraq has moved closer to this possibility primarily because of weak governance, increasing security challenges, and no agreement on a national compact." He added that the inability of politicians to resolve key issues, particularly the militia problem, contributed to Sunni discontent.[19]

The *Washington Post* also summarized U.S. concerns about the Maliki government at the end of 2006 as follows:

> US intelligence thinks Maliki is under enormous pressure and is therefore unpredictable. American military commanders think they can deal with him, but only with a lot of work and patience. State Department officials are uncertain about his prospects but contend that it is time for Maliki to take control—and for the US to keep the Baghdad government at arms length. . . The shared fear, however, is that any new US strategy might shift greater control to Maliki and that then he might be unable or unwilling to take the tough steps needed. The US would be back to square one.[20]

Politics and the Militia Issue

One of the most serious issues the Maliki government faced was how, when, and whether to deal with Shi'ite militias. In the fall of 2006, Prime Minister al-Maliki favored a political solution. The U.S. military and Sunni politicians, however, urged a harder line. Al-Sadr's Mahdi Army had swelled in 2006, and it was clear that U.S. tactical victories in 2003 and 2004 had not eliminated popular support for the Sadrist movement. Some U.S. officials, therefore, supported disarming the militia, arresting those involved in sectarian violence, and then working to provide political and economic alternatives to the Mahdi Army.

Ongoing sectarian violence in October 2006, however, prevented constructive political dialogue. On October 9, gunmen killed the brother of Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi. The incident sparked renewed accusations from Sunni legislators that Shi'ite politicians allowed the militias to operate and kill Sunnis. The day of the assassination, political leaders had been planning to meet to discuss ways to end the sectarian violence, but tempers were so heated that the meeting was called off.

The result was that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice issued a harsh warning to Iraqi leaders that the United States would not support an internally torn government and that al-Maliki had to take a stand against the militias. Yet reconciliation was difficult when sectarian reprisal killings were averaging 77 a day in October. Hassan al-Shimari, a legislator from the Shi'ite Fadhila Party, said, "The trust between [Sunnis and Shi'ites] is destroyed. Each side is afraid of the other, and in these meetings, the fear is increasing."

In a rare interview in *USA Today,* printed on October 13, 2006, al-Maliki laid out his goals for reconciliation and his view on militias. He said in order for the militias to be controlled, "The main step is to fix the problems we have within the Interior and Defense ministries and within the intelligence agencies." He also blamed MNF-I for choosing quantity over quality when building the Iraqi security forces. He reiterated that a political solution could be found to end the violence and that both sides were close to reconciliation.

Al-Maliki also criticized U.S. military plans to attack the Mahdi Army inside Sadr City; "It will give the wrong message—that this action is directed at Shi'ites, not the Mahdi Army. We have told the Americans that we don't mind targeting a Mahdi Army cell inside Sadr City. But the way the international forces are thinking of confronting this issue will destroy an entire neighborhood. Of course it was rejected." He also said that calls for federalism would diminish if the security was restored and economic recovery could begin.

U.S. forces did, however, arrest a senior aide to al-Sadr on October 17. Sheik Mazin al-Saedi was suspected of kidnappings and planning attacks on U.S. troops. When al-Maliki heard of the arrest, he met with al-Sadr in Najaf and then asked the United States to release al-Saedi. The U.S. military complied saying, "It's a government of Iraq issue."[21] The incident underscored the difference between al-Maliki's diplomatic approach to combating the militia problem and the American military strategy.

Tensions between the U.S. military and al-Maliki arose again in late October. On October 25 Iraqi forces, with U.S. airpower backup, raided Sadr City. The raid was aimed at capturing a "top illegal armed group commander directing widespread death squad activity."[22] The U.S. military later identified the rogue Mahdi Army commander as Abu Dera, but said the raid did not succeed in capturing him. U.S. and Iraqi forces had previously targeted Dera in a failed July 7 raid in Sadr City, according to a Reuters report.[23]

In the process, the joint raid killed ten Iraqis and wounded two. Prime Minister al-Maliki said that he was not consulted before the raid began. Al-Maliki publicly

disavowed the mission and said, "We will ask for clarification about what has happened in Sadr City. We will review this issue with the multinational forces so that it will not be repeated. . . The Iraqi government should be aware and part of any military operation."[24] Following the raid, the *New York Times* reported that residents from Sadr City were seen protesting in the streets and condemning U.S. forces.[25]

At the same time, a U.S. soldier was kidnapped in Baghdad and the military installed checkpoints in Sadr City. The checkpoints remained for several days, but on October 31 Prime Minister al-Maliki ordered their removal. The checkpoints had effectively isolated the Shi'ite neighborhood, but had done little to reduce violence. On October 30 a bomb killed 33 Shi'ite laborers while they waited for work. A car bomb also killed three and wounded five.[26] Al-Maliki's move clearly centered on maintaining the support of his Shi'ite base and al-Sadr's political party. Sunni politicians, however, condemned al-Maliki's move. Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi said, "I'm afraid that by lifting the siege the government sent the wrong message to those who stand behind terrorism in Iraq. It says the iron fist will loosen and they can move freely."[27]

Gen. John Abizaid, Commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), told Congress that he expected joint Iraqi–U.S. raids into Sadr City to increase despite tensions with al-Maliki over the U.S. role. He said that all raids would be conducted with the approval of the Iraqi government, but that the "command and control arrangements are adequate for the current period."[28] He also said later in the briefing that he expected al-Maliki to move against the Mahdi Army using the Iraqi Army.[29] It appeared that the U.S. military was determined to urge Prime Minister al-Maliki to take military action against militias.

Sunnis increasingly threatened to withdraw from the government unless al-Maliki took a stance against the militias. For example, the National Concord Front, a bloc of three Sunni parties with 44 seats in parliament, threatened to leave government and take up arms unless Shi'ite militias were dissolved. Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi said, "The government has not lived up to its commitments to the Concord, especially maintaining a balance among Iraq's different groups. This is due to those working in the ministries and state institutions."[30]

All these problems were compounded by efforts by Iraqi politicians to exercise control over security force activities on sectarian lines. An Iraqi commander in Baghdad said that he frequently received phone calls from government officials ordering him to release someone that Iraqi troops had captured engaging in some act of sectarian violence. In one instance, U.S. and Iraqi troops found a bullet-ridden car, sniper bullets, threatening notices to Shi'ites, and fake license plates. But when troops began to move in on the vehicle, the Iraqi commander received a call from the office of a top Sunni politician who owned the car and troops had to back off.

The U.S. Deputy Commander for the Dagger Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, said that he had "personally witnessed about a half-dozen of these incidents of what I would call 'political pressure,' where a minister or someone from a minister's office contacts one of these Iraqi commanders."[31] He added that the pressure placed on Iraqi police forces was even greater. These incidents of "political pressure"

strengthened the argument that the solution in Iraq had to be political as well as military, but it also offered little hope that political progress could take place when sectarianism was so entrenched in the daily political process.[32]

Shi'ite Tensions and Divisions within the Government

Efforts to build a more stable Shi'ite coalition continued to have mixed results. Some Shi'ite parties in the United Iraqi Alliance made several attempts to limit the power of the Sadrists. There was a general consensus among Shi'ites that al-Sadr held too much control over al-Maliki. Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, however, announced that he would support an effort against the Sadrists only if it did not break up the tenuous Shi'ite coalition. Shi'ite efforts to limit al-Sadr largely failed in the fall of 2006, and he continued to hold significant sway in the government and among the population.

Continued Sunni insurgent attacks on sectarian targets, however, did more to pressure al-Sadr to leave the government. Moqtada al-Sadr threatened to withdraw support for al-Maliki's government after the single largest attack since the U.S.–led invasion killed over 200 Shi'ites in Sadr City on November 23, 2006. Salih al-Ighaeli, a representative from Sadr's political bloc, said, "We announce that if the security situation and the basic services do not improve, and if the prime minister goes ahead and meets with the criminal Bush in Amman, then we will suspend our memberships with the Iraqi parliament and the government."[33] U.S. President George W. Bush was scheduled to travel to Amman, Jordan, to meet with Prime Minster al-Maliki the following week.[34] A representative for al-Sadr said, "We blame the government for the attacks. We have no trust in the government or in the Americans." He stated that the U.S. military needed to set a timetable for withdrawal or leave immediately.[35]

Sadr's political bloc followed through with its threat to boycott the Iraqi parliament when al-Maliki met with Bush in Jordan. The Sadrists called it an "indefinite suspension," but stated that the boycott did not mean they were withdrawing from the political process.[36] Falah Hassan Shenshel, a member of the Sadr bloc, said that boycotting politicians were working to organize a bisectarian alliance to end the U.S. military presence in Iraq. When the Sadr bloc did not return to parliament after the talks in Jordan ended, al-Maliki called for an end to the boycott.[37] The Sadrists, however, continued to boycott the government into 2007.

Unfulfilled Rumors of a Government Shakeup and De-Ba'athifcation Reform

It became clear that al-Maliki had reservations about his cabinet, but did not have the power to act. Al-Maliki announced on November 12, 2006, that he would "shake up" his cabinet. Sunni politicians had called for a cabinet change since the summer, but for the first time al-Maliki affirmed his intentions. He made the announcement during a closed session of parliament and did not release the

names of the cabinet members that he was planning to replace or move to different positions.

Al-Maliki's planned redistribution had Sunni and Shi'ite support.[38] Adnan al-Dulaimi said that al-Maliki was considering changing 10 of the 36 cabinet posts. Although al-Maliki could not take a ministerial position away from a certain political bloc, he could choose more secular or moderate members within a bloc.[39]

The key Defense and Interior Ministry posts would go unchanged, but Health, Transportation, Culture, Woman's Affairs, and Tourism Ministers would be replaced. Al-Maliki's critics said that the shakeup was only symbolic because it did not change key security posts. Da'wa Legislator Abbas Bayati responded, "The security dilemma is not an issue of ministries. The issue is beyond the government and ministries. The real challenge is to find reconciliation and political understanding. It's not possible to accuse the security ministries of poor performance."

Many Sunnis welcomed a change in the Health Ministry, a position held by al-Sadr's bloc, which was widely accused of sectarianism, but al-Sadr had the responsibility of nominating a new minister. A member of the Da'wa Party admitted, "The service ministries are performing poorly, that's obvious to everyone. The Sadr bloc supervises many of the service ministries. The reshuffle is not targeted toward their bloc. It happens that the ministries they control are service ministries."[40] However, al-Maliki failed to follow through with the shakeup in any real-world time frame. The reshuffle was delayed well into 2007, leaving many Sunnis further disappointed with the Maliki government.

De-Ba'athification reform also remained one of the 50 ambiguities in the Iraqi constitution and a key source of contention between Iraq's ethnic and sectarian groups. Like many other issues, however, de-Ba'athification did not move beyond the discussion phase in the fall of 2006.

The Iraqi government announced that it had prepared a draft law that would allow the return of former Ba'ath government workers on November 6, 2006. Ali al-Lami, Executive Director of the Supreme National Commission for De-Ba'athification, said the law would allow former Ba'athists, who disavowed the party, to return to government jobs or to receive their pension. Al-Lami said that if passed by parliament, the law would apply to roughly 1.5 million former Ba'athists. He added that the top 3,000 Ba'ath government workers would be given only their pensions, but would not be allowed to return to work, and about 1,500 of the highest level government employees would be given neither option.[41]

Vicious Cycle of Blame

The end result was that the Iraqi government and its critics were caught in a cycle of mutual blame that only heightened sectarian tensions. Both sides were unwilling to accept responsibility for decisions or acknowledge past mistakes. It was virtually impossible for reconciliation to proceed in this environment.

Sunni leaders repeatedly expressed disapproval of the Iraqi government. Sheik Harith al-Shari, an exiled and wanted leader of the Association of Islamic Scholars,

said, "I call on the Arab states, the Arab League and the United Nations to stop this government and withdraw its support from it. Otherwise, the disaster will occur and the turmoil will happen in Iraq and other countries.[42]

Prime Minister al-Maliki continued the cycle of blame, accusing Iraq's politicians of propagating the violence at the end of November. He said, "These actions are at most the reflection of political backgrounds and wills and sometimes the reflection of dogmatic, perverted backgrounds and wills. The crisis is political, and the ones who can stop the cycle of aggravation and bloodletting of innocents are the politicians."[43]

An exchange between the Iraqi government and the Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars on January 5, 2007, exemplified the tensions that hindered political progress and incited sectarian violence. The Association of Muslim Scholars issued a statement that said it had obtained information that militias were planning to attack neighborhoods in Baghdad and, "We also have come to know that some officials in this government know of this criminal scheme, which raises suspicions that they are collaborating with these militias." "The Association of Muslim Scholars holds the current Iraqi government and the occupation forces responsible for any injustice against Iraqi people."[44] Al-Maliki's office responded, "What has been written in the statement of the Association of Muslim Scholars is absolutely incorrect and it could provoke sedition. We hold the association responsible for anything that could happen as a result of this."[45]

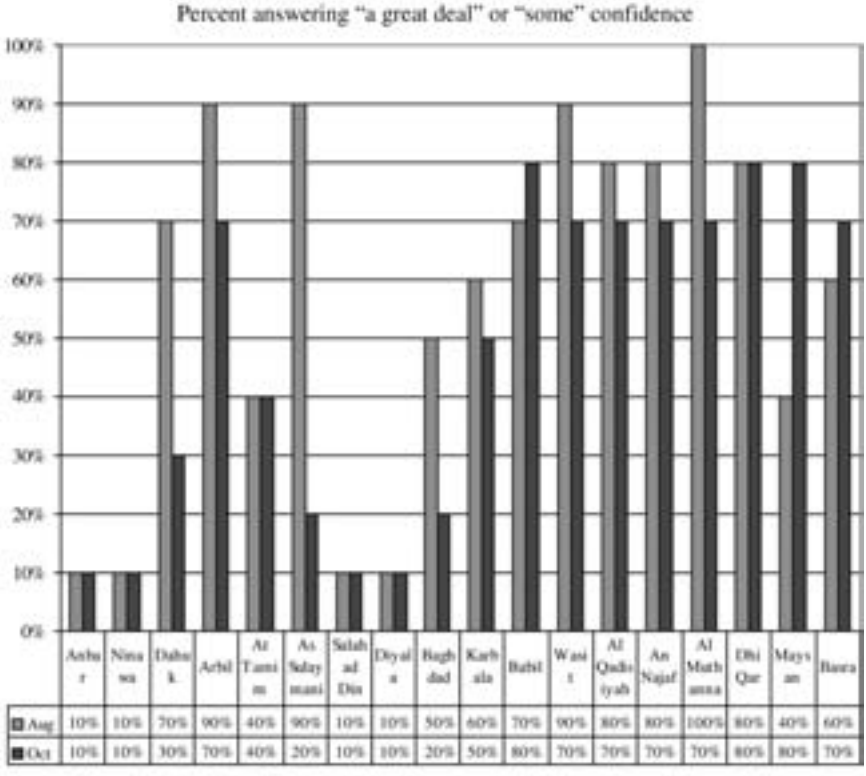
Iraqi Public Opinion on the Iraqi Government

Iraqi public opinion reacted to these failures in ways that indicate there was little popular support for Iraq's rising divisions and violence. In early September 2006, WorldPublicOpinion.org conducted a survey of Iraqi public opinion on political and security issues. Overall Iraqi confidence in the security situation fell since a survey in January 2006. Confidence in the Iraqi government also fell with a majority of Iraqis thinking that the country was headed in the wrong direction. Sunnis in particular had grown more pessimistic since January.

The Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" Quarterly Report to Congress for November 2006 included a poll that showed the changing views on the ability of the Iraqi government.[46] As shown in Figures 10.1 and 10.2, confidence in the Iraqi government to protect from threats fell in most governorates, except in the Shi'ite-dominated provinces of Babil, Maysan, and Basra.

Iraqis were also questioned about their views of various Shi'ite leaders in Iraq, including the prime minister, as shown in Figure 10.3. Despite reports that al-Sistani's power was waning in late 2006, the top Shi'ite cleric still garnered more support than the prime minister. Al-Sadr, however, also received 51 percent of the Shi'ite vote. Kurds and Sunnis substantially rejected al-Sadr's leadership.

The overall popular view of progress in Iraq fell significantly since the previous World Public Opinion poll in January 2006.[47] As Figures 10.4 and 10.5 show, when asked if they thought Iraq was going in the right direction, 59 percent of Shi'a, 64



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 26.

Note: Data points are estimates from the above-mentioned report.

Figure 10.1 Confidence in the Ability of the Iraqi Government to Protect from Threats; Comparison of August and October 2006

percent of Kurds, and 6 percent of Sunnis, compared with 84 percent, 76 percent, and 6 percent, respectively, in January, thought their country was on the right track. For the first time, an overall 52 percent thought Iraq was headed in the wrong direction. The number of Iraqis who still believed that ousting Saddam Hussein was worth it fell from 77 percent in January to 61 percent in September. Moreover, the general mood for the future was pessimistic; 31 percent expected the violence to be the same in six months, and 30 percent expected it to be higher.[48]

In addition, 77 percent of Iraqis favored a strong government that would get rid of militias, as shown in Figure 10.6. Sunnis overwhelmingly voted against militias, with 100 percent desiring a strong central government that would not tolerate militias. Shi'ites voted 33 percent in favor of militias, while Kurds voted 15 percent in favor. Similarly, 36 percent of Shi'a believed that in mid-2006 the central government had too much power, compared with 46 percent of Sunnis. These seemingly

Figure 10.2 Confidence in the Government to Improve the Situation; Comparison of July and October 2006

Percent answering "very" or "somewhat" confident that the Government of Iraq could improve the situation in Iraq

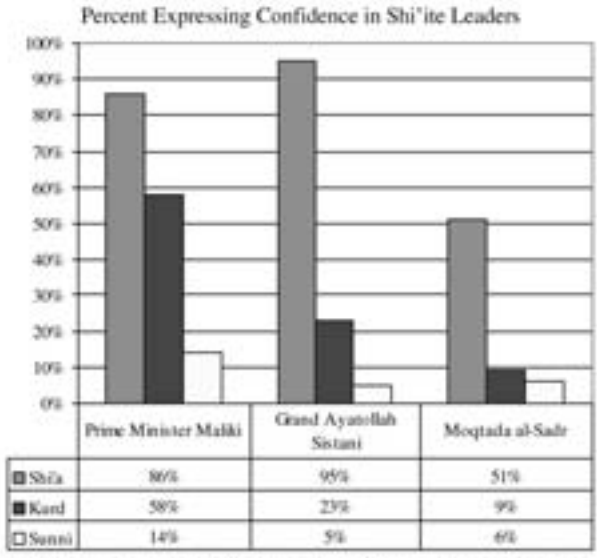
Iraqi Province	July 2006	October 2006
Ninawa	50–75%	0–15%
Dahuk	75–100%	75–100%
Arbil	75–100%	75–100%
Sulaymaniya	75–100%	75–100%
Tamim	25–50%	25–50%
Salah ad Din	0–25%	0–25%
Diyala	0–15%	0–25%
Baghdad	75–100%	50–75%
Karbala	75–100%	50–75%
Babil	75–100%	50–75%
Wasit	75–100%	50–75%
Najaf	75–100%	50–75%
Qadisiya	75–100%	50–75%
Muthanna	75–100%	50–75%
Dhi Qar	75–100%	50–75%
Maysan	75–100%	50–75%
Basra	75–100%	50–75%

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 5.

contradictory numbers for Sunnis may have been a result of dissatisfaction with the Shi'ite-dominated government; they most likely wanted a central authority with more Sunni representation that would end Shi'ite militias. Despite coinciding talks of federalism, most Iraqis (72 percent) believed that in five years the nation would still be a single state. Sunnis were the most doubtful with only 56 percent saying that unity was "very/somewhat likely."

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S SENTENCING AND THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

The trials of Saddam Hussein and his top followers became another source of sectarian political tensions, and the execution of the former leader some three years after his capture divided the country further along sectarian and ethnic lines. On November 5, 2006, an Iraqi court sentenced Saddam Hussein to death by execution for the killing of 148 Shi'ites in 1982 after an assassination attempt. The conviction received widespread support from the Iraqi Shi'ite community. The global response, however, was mixed. President Bush and Iranian leaders commended the decision, but Europe and other Arab states questioned the sentence.



Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "The Iraqi Public on the US Presence and the Future of Iraq," September 27, 2006, polling conducted September 1-4, sample of 1150 from all 18 governorates.

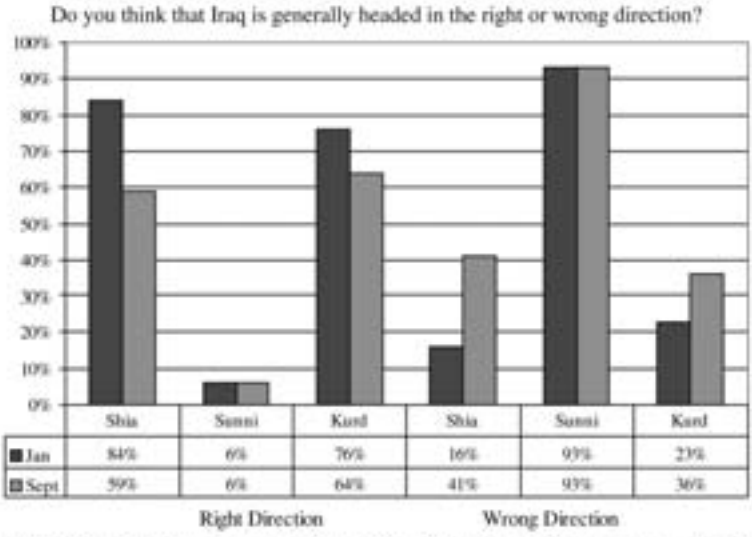
Figure 10.3 Iraqi Views on Various Shi'ite Leaders

Lawmakers in Jordan and Egypt stated that the entire trial was illegitimate, calling it "American engineered propaganda."[49] Magda Adli of the Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence in Cairo added, "Everyone knows that the crimes and the genocides committed by the occupation during the past four years against Iraqis are equivalent to four times the crimes they claim were committed by Saddam."[50] Others warned that hanging Hussein would turn him into a martyr figure and exacerbate the civil conflict.[51]

Figure 10.4 Iraqi Political Divisions by Iraqi Ethnic Group and Arab Religious Sect

Iraqi Political Attitudes in the Fall of 2006	Total	Kurds	Shi'a	Sunni
Is Iraq going in the right direction?				
Right direction	48%	64%	59%	6%
Wrong direction	52%	36%	41%	93%
How likely do you think it is that 5 years from now Iraq will still be a single state?				
Likely	72%	65%	80%	56%
Not Likely	28%	35%	19%	45%
Do you think that ousting Saddam Hussein was worth it?				
Worth it	61%	81%	75%	11%

Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "The Iraqi Public on the US Presence and the Future of Iraq," September 27, 2006, polling conducted September 1–4, sample of 1,150 from all 18 governorates.



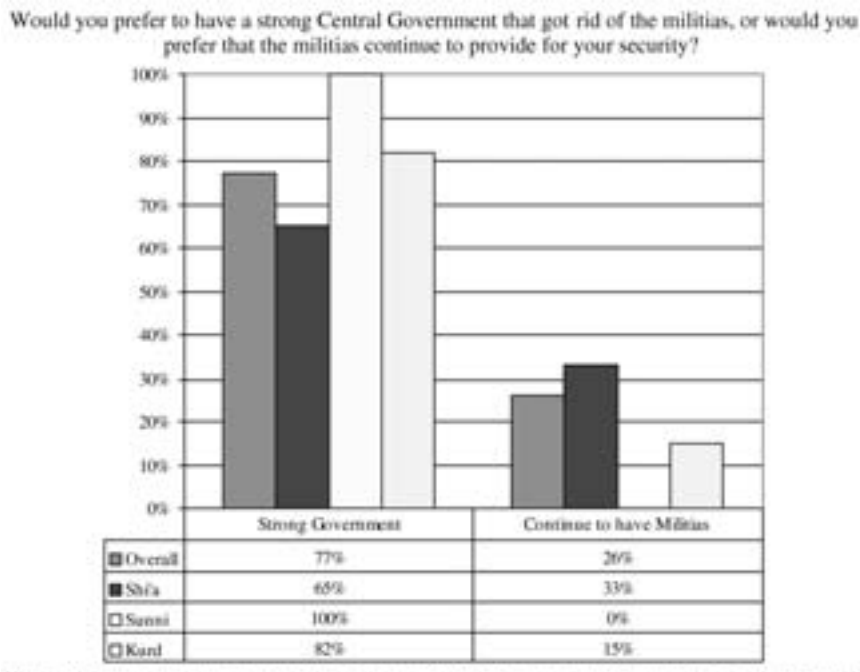
Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "The Iraqi Public on the US Presence and the Future of Iraq," September 27, 2006, polling conducted September 1-4, sample of 1150 from all 18 governorates.

Figure 10.5 Iraqi Opinions of the Future—Early 2006 versus Mid-2006

Saudi analysts also questioned the credibility of the trial. One analyst said, "The trial was politicized and the outcome known . . . We all know that Saddam's guards are all Americans and the lawyers have been fired many times and the judges have been changed three times without any good reason. All these things prove that the judgment was biased."[52] He did not think that the outcome of the trial would affect violence in Iraq, however, because the fight was against the American occupation.[53]

The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights stated strong objections to the proceedings of the trial. The main objections were as follows:[54]

- The restricted personal jurisdiction of the tribunal, which enables it only to try Iraqis.
- Its limited temporal jurisdiction. The competence of the tribunal does include neither the war crimes committed by foreign troops during the first Gulf war (1990), nor the war crimes committed after 1 May 2003, date of the beginning of the occupation.
- Its doubtful legitimacy and credibility. The tribunal has been established during an occupation considered by many as illegal, is composed of judges who have been selected during this occupation, including non Iraqi citizens, and has been mainly financed by the United States.
- The fact that the Statute of 10 December 2003 contains advanced provisions of international criminal law which are to be applied in combination with an outdated Iraqi legislation, which allows the death penalty.
- The negative impact of the violence and the insecurity prevailing in the course of the trial and in the country. Since its beginning one of the judges, five candidate judges,



Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "The Iraqi Public on the US Presence and the Future of Iraq," September 27, 2006, polling conducted September 1-4, sample of 1150 from all 18 governorates.

Figure 10.6 Strength of Central Government

three defence lawyers and an employee of the tribunal have been killed. Moreover, another employee of the tribunal has been seriously injured.

- Finally, and most importantly, the lack of observance of a legal framework that conforms to international human rights principles and standards, in particular the right to be tried by an independent and impartial tribunal which upholds the right to a defense.

For Prime Minister Maliki in Iraq, however, the verdict came as a welcome political boost. Celebrating Shi'ites said that trial and conviction brought legitimacy to Maliki's government. Saddam's sentence brought Maliki closer to his Shi'ite political base, but Sunnis saw it only as his tacit support of Shi'ite militias.[55]

Saddam Hussein was executed by hanging on December 30, 2006, for crimes against humanity. The penalty came five days after an Iraqi appeals court upheld the November 5 decision. A *New York Times* report stated that al-Maliki had continually urged U.S. military officials to hand over control of Hussein as quickly as possible. U.S. Ambassador Kalmay Khalilzad said that there was no possible way of delaying the transfer to the Iraqis. Interviews with American officials following the hanging found that the United States had made significant efforts to delay the execution, but the final result was a "clash of cultures and political interests."[56]

Hussein was put to death on the start of the Eid al-Adha holiday for Sunnis, in spite of requests by American officials that the former leader not be executed on the holiday and that his two deputies be given 30 days to sign off on the sentence.[57] Under the Iraqi constitution, President Talabani—who opposed the death penalty—and the two deputies had to sign off on the execution, but a court rule prevented any change once a sentence was ratified by the appeals panel.[58]

The nature of the execution itself, however, did the most to exacerbate sectarian tensions. A cell phone video during the execution captured two security guards taunting Saddam and shouting, "Moqtada, Moqtada." The images were broadcast worldwide and immediately sparked protests and sectarian attacks.

Sunni demonstrators broke the locks on the Golden Shrine in Samarra that had been attacked in February 2006 and carried a mock casket. Neighborhoods in Baghdad also praised the Ba'ath Party and continued to pledge their support for Ba'athist fighters. There were several incidents of low-intensity violence by Ba'athist insurgent groups. The majority of Sunnis denounced the nature of the execution as a serious political mistake by the Shi'ite-led government that further alienated the Sunni population. The Iraqi government did launch an investigation into the jeering and misbehavior seen by Shi'ite security guards at Hussein's hanging and arrested two guards suspected of circulating the cell phone video. But one Sunni educator said they had already "changed him from a criminal into a martyr."[59]

The United States distanced itself from the execution and reiterated that it was a unilateral Iraqi decision and that the U.S. military played no part, except to airlift Hussein's body for burial in his hometown of Tikrit. MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell did concede, "If you're asking me, would we have done things different, yes, we would have. But that's not our decision. That's a government of Iraq decision."[60] Like the capture of Hussein three years earlier in December 2003, his execution did little to quell violence and only deepened the sectarian conflict. By this point, the war had moved far beyond the overthrow of a dictator.

STILL RISING LEVELS OF CONFLICT

Sectarian and ethnic divisions continued to grow in the fall of 2006. The base for violence and cleansing expanded to include more and more of the population in areas where there was sectarian and ethnic tension and violence. This increase in tension was particularly common where militias and local security forces provided the only real security; young men had little employment; and the struggle for control of villages, cities, and neighborhoods became a struggle for housing, businesses, and the ability to conduct a normal life. The United Nations estimated that Iraqi civilian deaths averaged 94 a day in the fall of 2006. The Iraqi conflict might not have divided into easily definable sides or patterns of violence, but it was clearly a civil war.

Broad struggles existed in most of the country with mixed populations for control or dominance by Shi'ite, Sunni, and Kurdish factions, often driving out smaller minorities or suppressing them. These struggles were difficult to map or quantify,

but affected virtually every governorate. Kurd-Arab struggles were particularly important in the north near Kirkuk, the northern oil fields, to the east of Mosul, and in areas with a Turkoman population. Sectarian cleansing continued to be a major problem in the Basra area, in many towns and villages, and in rural areas throughout the country with mixed Sunni and Shi'ite populations. The Pentagon's August–November "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report summarized the security environment as follows:[61]

- Baghdad remained the focus of much of Iraq's violence, but it was also significant in Diyala and Anbar provinces and in the cities of Kirkuk, Mosul, Basra, Amara, and Balad.
- The violence in Anbar was almost completely initiated by Sunni extremists and directed at Coalition forces. However, there were attempts by al-Qaeda in Iraq and affiliated Sunni extremists to intimidate the local population. These efforts provoked a backlash. Some tribal chiefs and Sunni Rejectionist leaders began localized efforts to retake control of their areas.
- In Diyala, and recently in Balad, conflict between al-Qaeda in Iraq and Jaysh al-Mahdi was a sectarian fight for power and influence. In Diyala, sectarian violence decreased in September, largely due to a successful series of Iraq Army/Coalition forces operations, which significantly degraded al-Qaeda in Iraq activity. However, in October, the number of casualties rose, as al-Qaeda in Iraq resumed sectarian attacks.
- The conflict in Basra, Amara, and the south was characterized by tribal rivalry, increasing intra-Shi'a competition and attacks on Coalition forces operating in the region.

Baghdad remained the most visible center of the violence. Sectarian militias fought to gain strongholds in the neighborhoods surrounding the Green Zone, which could virtually be mapped out according to the militia or neighborhood gang residents supported. The Mahdi Army had almost complete control of the eastern portion of the city, but through soft ethnic cleansing by militias, Shi'ite extremists gained a foothold in the western neighborhoods. Sunnis relied increasingly on insurgent groups and neighborhood gangs for protection and to seek revenge.

The November–December Human Rights Report by the United Nations said the following of the capital:

> Baghdad is at the center of the sectarian violence. Sunni and Shiite armed groups are attempting to establish territorial control of Baghdad's many predominantly mixed neighborhoods by intimidating and killing civilian populations and forcing them into displacements to parts of the city inhabited or controlled by members of their ethnic group. Reports suggest the existence of large movements of populations primarily within the city boundaries, as the neighborhoods become increasingly divided among Sunni and Shi'a armed groups, and are consequently grouped together based on their sect and ethnicity. This forces displacement has been achieved by means of large scale attacks targeting civilians, kidnappings, extra-judicial killings, dropping of leaflets, destruction of property, and intimidation. For instance, fighting between Sunni and Shiite armed

groups were primarily recorded in December in Baghdad's neighborhoods of Dora, Hurriyah, Al Adhamiya, Khadimiyah, Ghazaliyah, Amariya and Qadisiyah.[62]

Although large-scale attacks and extrajudicial killings caused grave loss of life, the UN report noted that intimidation campaigns, kidnappings, and destruction of property equally contributed to the polarization of sects into controlled areas. The key issue at stake was not only territorial control, but also control of political and economic space. In order for the armed sectarian groups to sustain their movements, they needed to gain the support of the population.

The number of attacks in Iraq also continued to become increasingly less important as a metric of overall violence as the insurgency transformed into a civil conflict. What was important was the growing control of local populations by sectarian armed groups. Nationalists were either eliminated or coerced into taking a side in the sectarian struggle. Ethnic groups built up local security structures—often in the absence of adequate government security forces—to gain the trust and political backing of members of their respective sects.

Soft sectarian cleansing had all but eliminated nationalist voices at the beginning of 2007, although publicly the Iraqi government and security forces voiced their commitment to unity. The reality was that increasingly the Iraqi population—the people who would control the outcome of the conflict—tied themselves to a variety of locally armed groups who all fought for control of political and economic space. Corruption and the local and national levels and widespread unemployment in ethnically mixed violent cities led many young men to join sectarian groups simply with the hope of bringing life back to normal.

Defining the Conflict: "Civil War" or "Almost"

These developments made the various conflicts in Iraq more complex and harder to define. The conflict was a civil war by every practical definition. In various reports and discussions the U.S. military labeled Iraq as edging toward "chaos." CENTCOM's "Index of Civil Conflict" tracked the transition from "peace" toward chaos in 2006. The Index showed that since the Samarra mosque bombing in February, Iraq had moved closer to civil conflict. CENTCOM released a one-page slide that showed the spectrum and the indicators that caused the "critical" situation. Each indicator was given a degree of concern. The main "key reads" included the following:[63]

- Political/religious leaders increase public hostile rhetoric (routine),
- Political/religious leaders lose moderating influence over public (significant),
- Provoking sectarian attacks/assassinations (irregular), and
- Unorganized mass spontaneous civil conflict (routine).

Additional indicators included the following:

- Militias expand security role (significant),
- Governance (significant),
- Police ineffectual (significant),
- Army ineffectual (irregular),
- Neighbors enable violence (irregular),
- Sectarian tensions/violence displace population (significant),
- Sectarian conflict between/within Iraqi security forces (ISF) (irregular),
- ISF refuse to take orders from central government, mass desertion (irregular),
- Kurds accelerate moves toward succession, annexing Kirkuk (irregular), and
- Low-level violence motivated by sectarian differences (critical).

The Pentagon's August–November "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report now defined the conflict in largely sectarian and ethnic terms:

> The conflict in Iraq has been characterized by a struggle between Sunni and Shi'a armed groups fighting for religious, political, and economic influence, set against a backdrop of a Sunni insurgency and terrorist campaigns directed against the majority Shi'a Government of Iraq and the Coalition forces that are supporting it. The competition among factions has manifested itself in ethno-sectarian violence, conflicting national and provincial politics, suspension about the work of government ministries, pressures in ISF operations, and criminal activities. In contested areas, such as Baghdad, Diyala, and Kirkuk, extremists on all sides have sought to undermine the religious and ethnic tolerance of the Iraqi people in order to gain control of territory and resources.[64]

The report still did not describe the conflict as "civil war," but came so close that the difference became a minor matter of semantics:

> At the present time, sustained ethno-sectarian violence is the greatest threat to security and stability in Iraq. Competition between sects and ethnic political groups for economic and political power has become a dominant feature in the political landscape. Such violence is tragic and tends to undermine the rule of law and discredit the elected government. However, the situation in Iraq is far more complex than the term "civil war" implies; attempts to define the several and diverse sources of violence as civil war are not helpful to Iraqi efforts to arrive at political accommodations.
>
> However, conditions that could lead to civil war do exist, especially in and around Baghdad, and concern regarding civil war runs high among the Iraqi populace. Within the four provinces where the overwhelming majority of attacks occur (Anbar, Baghdad, Salah ad Din, and Diyala), violence remains localized to mixed neighborhoods. The Iraqi institutions of the center are holding, and members of the current government have not openly abandoned the political process. Decisive leadership by the Government of Iraq, supported by the United States and its Coalition partners, could mitigate further movement toward civil war and curb sectarian violence. Iraqi leaders must take advantage of the popular support for a unified Iraq and the opposition to violence to form institutions that take responsibility for Iraq's security.[65]

Various high-level officials inside and outside of Iraq now defined the conflict as civil war. Iraqi Defense Minister Abdel Qader Jassim said on November 20, 2006, "We are in a state of war and in war all measure[s] are permissible." He made the remarks several days after the fate of dozens of employees kidnapped from the Ministry of Higher Education was still unknown.[66] The statement was one of the first acknowledgements by a cabinet member of the scale of the violence engulfing Iraq.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said of the possibility of civil conflict, "Given the developments on the ground, unless something is done drastically and urgently to arrest the deteriorating situation we could be there. In fact, we are almost there."[67] Two weeks later, Annan revised his assessment and said, "When we had the strife in Lebanon and other places we called that a civil war; this is much worse."[68] Prime Minister al-Maliki rebuked Annan's characterization of the stability of Iraq and accused the Secretary-General of "burnishing the image" of Saddam Hussein.[69] Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also joined the international community in saying that Iraq was in civil war: "Muslims kill each other just because they belong to different sects. This is a civil war because I cannot make another definition."[70]

In November, several prominent U.S. media agencies also made public use of "civil war" in describing the conflict. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said when asked if a "military victory" could be achieved in Iraq, "If you mean by 'military victory' an Iraqi government that can be established and whose writ runs across the whole country, that gets the civil war under control and sectarian violence under control in a time period that the political processes of the democracies will support, I don't believe that is possible."[71] Colin Powell also said in a statement, "Iraq could be considered a civil war."[72] National Intelligence Director John Negroponte said that in many ways the situation in Iraq was more complex and more dangerous than the conflict in Vietnam.[73]

Some leaders, however, still felt that Iraq could avoid civil war. Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, leader of SCIRI, told President Bush in a meeting in Washington on December 4 that the only way to avoid full-scale civil war was "decisive strikes" against Sunni insurgents. Al-Hakim expressed concern that Shi'ite leaders were losing their ability to control the violence. He called clerics the "last fortress" against civil war.[74] Al-Hakim had received widespread criticism the previous week when he commented that if full-scale civil war broke out, Sunnis would be the "biggest losers."[75]

Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi said that there was no way Iraq would erupt into a full-scale civil war. He stated that the levels of violence—although bad—did not take into account the fact that Sunnis and Shi'ites had intermarried and that in the past, there had not been a problem between the two sects.[76] According to MNF-I spokesman Major General Caldwell, 4 million of 27 million Iraqis had mixed marriages in the fall of 2006.[77]

Caldwell agreed that sectarian violence was escalating, but the government had not fallen and was still effective so the country could not be described as being in a civil war.[78] U.S. National Security spokesman Gordon Johndroe also said, "While the

situation on the ground is very serious, neither Prime Minister Maliki nor we believe that Iraq is in a civil war."[79]

A poll included in the August–November Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress, however, found that Iraqis in most provinces were more concerned about the outbreak of full-scale civil war in October 2006 than they were at the same time in 2005. Figure 10.7 shows that Iraqis in Ninawa, Tamim, Salahaddin, Diyala, and Baghdad provinces were the most concerned about civil war, and—had the question been phrased slightly differently—almost certainly would have said they were in one. The largest increases in percent answering "very" or "somewhat" concerned over civil war were in the northern Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah provinces.

High-Profile Abductions and Civil Conflict

The rising level of civil conflicts continued to change the nature of the fighting in several different ways. Both Sunni insurgent and Shi'ite militia groups used kidnappings as a method of intimidation in campaigns of soft sectarian cleansing. On November 14, 2006, the largest mass kidnapping occurred since the U.S.–led invasion in 2003. Between 100 and 150 employees and visitors at the Sunni-controlled Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Scholarships and Cultural

Figure 10.7 How Concerned Are You That Civil War May Break Out in Iraq? Breakdown of Provinces, November 2005 and October 2006

	Percent answering "very" or "somewhat" concerned	
Iraqi Province	**November 2005**	**October 2006**
Ninawa	75–100%	75–100%
Dahuk	0–25%	50–75%
Arbil	0–25%	50–75%
Tamim	50–75%	75–100%
Sulaymaniyah	0–25%	50–75%
Salah ad Din	50–75%	75–100%
Diyala	50–75%	75–100%
Baghdad	50–75%	75–100%
Karbala	25–50%	25–50%
Babil	25–50%	25–50%
Wasit	25–50%	25–50%
Najaf	25–50%	25–50%
Muthanna	0–25%	25–50%
Qadisiyah	25–50%	25–50%
Dhi Qar	0–25%	25–50%
Maysan	0–25%	25–50%
Basra	0–25%	25–75%

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 24.

Relations Directorate in the downtown Karrada district of Baghdad were kidnapped by about 80 gunmen.

The Ministry was responsible for granting scholarships to professors and students wishing to study abroad. Witnesses said that the gunmen were dressed in police uniforms and cordoned off the street. The operation took only 15 minutes and the kidnappers locked the women into one room in the building and then separated out the males into Sunnis and Shi'ites, abducting the Sunnis. The Higher Education Minister, however, said that both Sunnis and Shi'ites were kidnapped.[80]

Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh acknowledged that the mass abduction was the work of militiamen who had infiltrated the Interior Ministry and were carrying out "organized" killings. Fourteen of the abductees were released unharmed the same day, but at least 40 were still held. The Interior Ministry announced that five police chiefs were being held for questioning in the incident. Previous sectarian violence had pointed to the infiltration of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) by Shi'ite militias, but the Higher Education kidnapping proved the validity of Sunni accusations so strongly that it even surprised most Iraqis. Iraq's leading Sunni clerics' organization, the Association of Muslim Scholars, said in a statement, "This cowardly act confirms what we have always warned and we blame the government and the interior ministry for this crime."[81]

A spokesman for Abed Dhiab al-Ujaili, the Minister of Higher Education, disagreed with al-Dabbagh, saying that nearly 100 captives were still being held. The two spokesmen dismissed the other's comments as false and misleading. Al-Ujaili, a Sunni, also announced that he was stepping down from his cabinet position until all the captives were rescued. He accused al-Maliki's administration of politicizing the kidnapping and that it was "unacceptable behavior."[82] He also said that most of the hostages had been tortured and some killed. Al-Ujaili added, "I feel there is no effective government."[83] The disagreement underscored the inability of Sunnis and Shi'ites within the government to find any common ground.

A report the following day said that an Iraqi police raid during the night had freed the majority of the captives and that only two were still held. Prime Minister al-Maliki also spoke at Baghdad University to calm students and professors and urge them to continue their studies in Iraq. He said, "The country is full of such gangs and militias but this will not drive us back from chasing them. Those who carried out the act are worse than *takfiris* [extremists] because they kidnapped intellectuals and prevented universities from executing their role."[84] Al-Maliki also told state news al-Iraqiya that the abductions were a result of a "conflict between militias."[85]

On November 17, 2006, another high-profile abduction took place, this time in the southern Dhi Qar Province. Five civilian contractors working for the Kuwaiti-based security firm Crescent Security Group were kidnapped from their vehicles at what appeared to be a police checkpoint. The convoy of 43 trucks supported by 6 security vehicles was stopped at Safwan. Nineteen trucks and one security vehicle were hijacked, and 14 people were initially captured. Nine drivers from India, Pakistan, and the Philippines were released, while four Americans and one Austrian were

taken to an unknown location.[86] One American and the Austrian were found dead, but the fate of three other Americans remained unknown.

A kidnapping of nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers in December by Sunni insurgents underscored the lack of security in Iraq almost four years after the initial invasion. On December 17, 30 members of the Iraqi Red Crescent Group in Baghdad were kidnapped. The following day, 17 were released, but many were still held in an unknown location. The group said that its office represented a variety of sects.

Reprisal Attacks and Killings

Reprisal killings, mostly in the form of assassinations or kidnappings followed by execution-style deaths, were another key cause of death to Iraqis in the fall of 2006. By October, around 100 Iraqis were killed daily by various forms of violence, according to the Iraqi government.[87] The September—October UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights Report said the following about reprisal attacks during the reporting period:

> The purpose of targeted attacks has mainly been to eliminate prominent members of a community, seek reprisal for the death of a family or sect member, often sparking sectarian violence, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of revenge killings . . . Frequent revenge attacks are recorded against police stations and recruitment centers either in retaliations for the kidnappings and murders attributed to the militias or designed to intimidate individuals and institutions from collaborating with MNF-I or the Government.[88]

One of the worst sequences of reprisal killings to date occurred in mid-October in the town of Balad, within the borders of the so-called "Sunni triangle." On October 12, 17 Shi'ite farmworkers from Balad were kidnapped and later executed in retaliation for the burning of three Sunnis the previous day.[89] The workers had been hired to prune date trees in the neighboring Sunni town of Duluiyah. Two days later, Shi'ite militiamen retaliated for the kidnapping by attacking Duluiyah and the Sunni minority in Balad.

Shi'ite elders in Balad said that they had called on the Badr Organization and the Mahdi Army from Baghdad to retaliate. After several hours of street battles, there were at least 80 dead between the two towns, but most were Sunnis. Residents from Balad and Duluiyah said that civilians had taken up arms against each other, and Sunni and Shi'ite mosques in the respective towns called on people to defend their neighborhoods.[90]

By the following day, the Sunni minority in Balad—where Shi'ite militiamen dressed in black patrolled the streets—had fled to Duluiyah.[91] Sunni families said that Shi'ite militiamen were going door to door telling them that they had two hours to leave or they would be killed.[92] A representative from the Iraqi Islamic Party said that 60 Sunni families were forced to flee Balad.[93] A Sunni farmer in Duluiyah said, "This has pushed us to the point that we must stop this sectarian government."[94]

Residents in Balad also reported that 13 carloads of Shi'ites had been kidnapped in the third day of the fighting and had not returned.[95]

Four days later, the Iraqi security forces were still deploying forces to deal with the aftermath of the violence. The U.S. military had arrested two Sunni Iraqi police officers suspected of killing the Shi'ite farmworkers.[96] Local Sunni police in Duluiyah, however, accused the ISF of working with Shi'ite militias during the fighting. A police officer said the violence between civilians in the cities was particularly vicious, even by Iraqi standards. He also said that the complete and sustained control of militias, which had traveled from Baghdad, within hours, was unprecedented.[97] The Sunni population in Balad was displaced; only six Sunni families remained a week after the fighting broke out.[98]

Tit-for-tat reprisal killings continued in November. Iraqi officials in Baghdad said that in the first week of November, the Adhamiya and Grayat neighborhoods along the Tigris River exchanged mortar fire. At least seven Sunnis were killed in Adhamiya when mortar rounds from Grayat landed in a market. Three hours later, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives belt in a crowded café in Grayat, killing 17 and injuring 21. Although the two neighborhoods were adjacent, Sunni and Shi'ite victims had to travel extra distances to their respective sectarian-controlled hospitals.[99] The attacks continued the following day when seven mortars fell on Adhamiya, killing 3 and wounding 15.[100]

As mentioned earlier, five carbombs exploded in Sadr City marketplaces midafternoon on November 23, killing more than 200 and wounding 250. The bombings were coordinated with Sunni insurgent attacks on the Shi'ite-run Health Ministry, in apparent revenge for the large-scale abduction at the Sunni-run Ministry of Higher Education the previous week.

In response to the bombings, Shi'ite militiamen from Sadr City fired mortars into the Sunni Adhamiya neighborhood, wounding ten.[101] The following day, Shi'ite militias attacked Sunni mosques throughout Iraq. Gunmen attacked two Sunni mosques in the Hurriya neighborhood in Baghdad with rocket-propelled grenades and burned two others. At least five were killed in the attacks, but the Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars said many more were killed.[102] Gunmen also opened fire on Sunni mosques in Baquba and Kirkuk, proving that sectarian conflict was no longer limited to the capital. Furthermore, families in Hurriya received letters threatening them to leave their homes within 72 hours, but militiamen forcibly expelled some.[103]

A Sadr City shop owner expressed the sentiments of many Shi'ites: "The feeling of revenge is more now than for the shrine in Samarra; that was just the building, and we can rebuild it. But what can we say about a family that has lost six members?"[104] In response, Sunni neighborhood gangs prepared for reprisal attacks worse than in February. A Sunni man in Adhamiyah said that the community appreciated U.S. military checkpoints, but that they were ready to defend their neighborhood. In a testament to the escalating civil war he said, "There are no more normal people in Adhamiyah, *all* of them are angry."[105]

Sectarian and Ethnic Displacement and Civil Conflict

The rising number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) also became a more critical problem that steadily gathered momentum. Soft ethnic cleansing was an increasingly common tactic used by ethnic groups to intimidate members of opposing sects as well as nationalists who refused to take a side in the civil conflict. Locally armed groups could win the support of communities by forcing individuals from minority sects to leave their homes through threats or killing of family members, leaving only members of one ethnic group.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were forced to leave towns in which they were a sectarian minority. Many found refuge with family or friends, but others were forced to live in temporary housing set up by aid organizations. A large number of Iraqis also fled the country, many of whom saw little hope of returning.

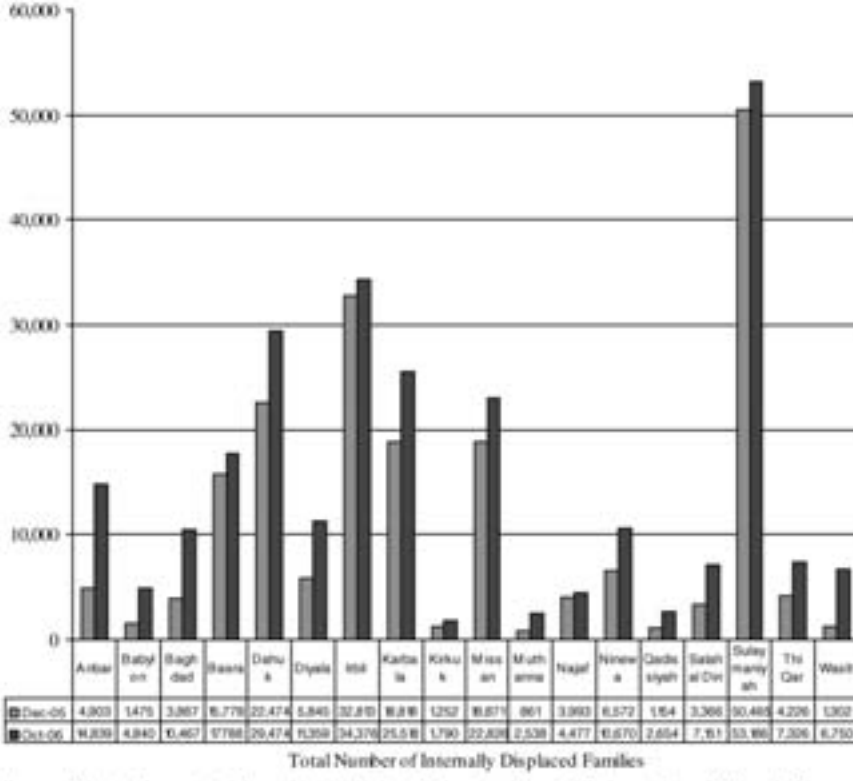
The numbers of IDPs reported by international or Iraqi organizations varied somewhat, and it was unclear what methods the agencies used to determine their respective numbers. Yet, all the reports showed a dramatic increase in the number of displaced persons since the mosque bombing in February. Displaced Iraqis fleeing sectarian violence were forced to live in poor, often overcrowded conditions with little hope of finding meaningful employment.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in October 2006 that 365,000 Iraqis were displaced following the Samarra mosque bombing, bringing the total of internally displaced to 1.5 million since the beginning of the war.[106] The majority of the displaced appeared to flow from Baghdad, but almost all of the governorates were affected. The Kurdistan Regional Government reported that 50,000 refugees arrived in Kurdish areas during a six-month period.[107] Figure 10.8 shows the number of internally displaced persons by province in October.

A late December 2006 article in the *International Herald Tribune* stated that 1.8 million Iraqis were living outside the country and 1.6 million had been internally displaced since 2003. Since February 2006, 50,000 moved within the country, and it appeared that the crisis was more pronounced among Shi'ites. The Housing Minister, Istabraq al-Shouk, estimated the housing shortage at about 2 million homes across Iraq.[108]

At the end of 2006, the UN estimated that there were 1.7 million internally displaced Iraqis, with average displacement at 40,000 to 50,000 a month.[109] A total of 470,094 Iraqis were displaced since the Samarra mosque bombing on February 22, 2006. The number of IDPs from Anbar Province was the highest in 2006 with 10,105 families displaced; Karbala had 7,570 families displaced; and Baghdad and Dohuk each had 7,000.[110]

The UN said that roughly 100,000 Iraqis had fled to other countries in 2006.[111] Jordan and Syria took on the majority of refugees, but both countries began to place restrictions on the number of Iraqis allowed across the border, and far fewer were granted refugee status. The United States granted only 466 Iraqis refugee status since 2003, only 3.5 percent of the total number of refugees allowed in the country in 2006, in part because of stringent security procedures.[112] Figure 10.9 shows the



Source: Adapted from material provided by United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq, October 2006, www.uniraq.org.

Figure 10.8 Number of Internally Displaced Families by Province/Major Cities: Comparison of December 2005 and October 2006

number of internally displaced persons in Iraq and the number of refugees who fled to other countries.

Neighboring countries were increasingly wary of accepting Iraqi refugees who could bring the sectarian war to their streets. The September–October UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights Report said that 44 percent of Iraqis seeking asylum in Syria were Christians. The emigration was a result of increased attacks against Christians in the fall of 2006.[113]

Jordanian officials estimated that nearly 750,000 Iraqis relocated to Amman—which had a population of 2.5 million—since 2003. Jordan had previously welcomed Iraqi refugees, but concerns rose at the end of 2006 that Iraqis were adversely affecting Jordan's economic situation and security. Jordan—a majority Sunni country—feared that fleeing Sunnis and Shi'ites would bring the sectarian war to the streets of Amman. Thus many Shi'ites trying to enter Jordan from Iraq said that they were being turned away, and those living in Amman felt ostracized. Police in Jordan began

Figure 10.9 The Refugee/Internally Displaced Person Crisis in Iraq, 2007

Type of Population	Origin/ Location	Jan 2007 Total	Jan 2007 To be Assisted and/ or Registered by UNHCR	Dec 2007 (projections/targets) Total	Dec 2007 (projections/targets) To be Assisted and/ or Registered by UNHCR
Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Iraq	Palestinians	15,000	5,000	7,500	7,500
	Turkish	16,110	16,110	8,950	8,950
	Iranian	11,960	11,960	11,150	11,150
	Syrian	870	870	–	–
	Sudanese	142	142	0	0
IDPs	Iraq	1,700,000	100,000	2,300,000–2,700,000	150,000–600,000
Iraqis in neighboring countries	Syria	500,000–700,000	40,000	500,000–1,000,000	100,000
	Jordan	500,000–700,000	21,000	500,000–700,000	70,000
	Egypt	–	2,500	–	20,000
	Lebanon	20,000-40,000	3,500	30,000–50,000	7,000–10,000
	Turkey	–	5,100	–	5,100
Returnees	Iraq	300,000		50,000	

Source: "Supplementary Appeal Iraq Situation Response," UNHCR, January 2007.

cracking down on illegal refugees, but according to those interviewed, Shi'ites were singled out for deportation—although the government denied the accusations.[114]

If one looks at the overall impact of displacements in 2006, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) stated that there were 41,189 newly displaced families in 2006. As Figure 10.10 shows, large numbers of refugees fled from Baghdad, Wassit, Ninewa, Anbar, Diyala, and Babil provinces. The IOM noted that the actual number of displaced families in Anbar was closer to 6,600.[115]

Figure 10.11 shows the places of origin of internally displaced persons in 2006 according to the IOM. By far the majority—69 percent—left Baghdad for other provinces. Another 12 percent left Diyala Province and 9 percent left Anbar Province. Baghdad and Diyala, arguably the two most highly contested provinces along sectarian lines, accounted for 81 percent of Iraqis leaving their homes.[116]

Further, Figure 10.12 indicates that 90 percent of those displaced in 2006 were Arab, 7 percent were Christian, and less than 1 percent were Sabean Mandean, Yazidi, Jewish, or other religions. Among displaced Arab families, 64 percent were Shi'ite and 28 percent were Sunni. The MOI stated that the general trend was Shi'ite families fleeing the center of the country to the south and Sunni families fleeing the south to the center and the west.[117]

Figure 10.10 Total Number of Internally Displaced Families by Province in 2006

Province	Total Number of Internally Displaced Families
Anbar	3,638
Babylon	3,271
Baghdad	6,651
Basra	1,487
Diyala	3,594
Kerbala	2,060
Missan	2,203
Muthanna	968
Najaf	2,069
Ninewa	3,665
Qadissiya	1,614
Salah ad-Sin	3,073
Tameeem/Kirkuk	1,002
Thi-Qar	2,072
Wassit	3,822

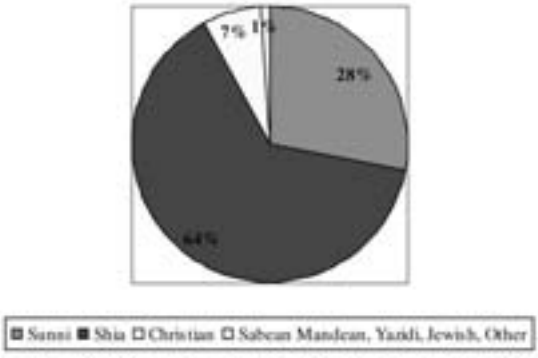
Source: "Iraq Displacement: 2006 Year in Review," International Organization for Migration, January 2007, www.moi-iraq.net.

March 2006, the month following the bombing of the mosque in Samarra, accounted for the largest wave of migration in Iraq, as shown in Figure 10.13. The summer of 2006 also saw a spike in movement.

Figure 10.11 Places of Origin of Internally Displaced Families in 2006

Province Fled	Number of Families; Percent of Total
Anbar	3,631; 9%
Babylon	380; 1%
Baghdad	28,254; 69%
Basra	1,153; 3%
Dahuk	3; .01%
Diyala	4,925; 12%
Erbil	7; .02%
Kerbala	3; .01%
Missan	2; .01%
Najaf	1; .01%
Ninewa	567; 1%
Qadissiya	6; .02%
Salad ad-Din	1,565; 4%
Temeem/Kirkuk	580; 1%
Thi-Qar	22; .06%
Wassit	66; .16%

Source: "Iraq Displacement: 2006 Year in Review," International Organization for Migration, January 2007, www.moi-iraq.net.



Source: "Iraq Displacement: 2006 Year in Review", International Organization for Migration, January 2007, www.moi-iraq.net.

Figure 10.12 Religion/Sect of Internally Displaced Persons in 2006

The MOI said that most internally displaced Iraqis fled their homes because they feared for their lives. Soft sectarian cleansing was the primary motivation for migration in 2006. The majority interviewed by the MOI said they left due to direct threats on their lives, which included abductions, assassinations of individuals or their families, or other intimidation threats. The second most popular reason for relocating was "generalized fear." In Anbar Province, some IDPs also cited armed conflict. Conventional armed conflict, such as that between Sunni insurgents and U.S. forces in Anbar, accounted only for a small percent of internal migration.[118]

The MOI found that the majority of IDPs felt well received in their new communities, which was because most fled from mixed communities to areas in which their sect was the majority. However, in the last months of 2006 the large numbers of IDPs in some communities and the poor economic conditions created tensions between IDPs and host communities. The MOI said the following:

Figure 10.13 Percentage of Total Persons Displaced per Month in 2006

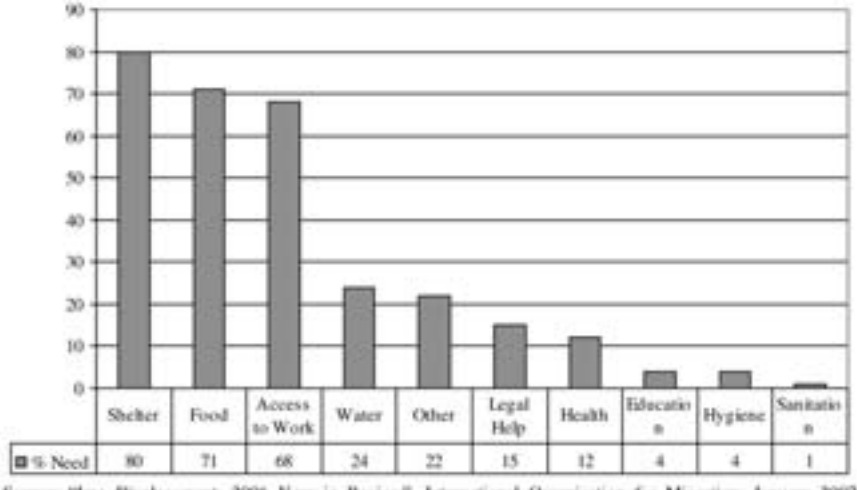
Month 2006	Percent Displaced
February	2%
March	23%
April	13%
May	10%
June	15%
July	14%
August	7%
September	6%
October	6%
November	4%

Source: "Iraq Displacement: 2006 Year in Review," International Organization for Migration, January 2007, www.moi-iraq.net.

> Local authorities decided to close the governorate's borders to all IDPs except those who were originally from Kerbala, and even most of these were restricted from entering. Najaf also reportedly restricted settlement in Najaf city. These restrictions were attributed to a strain on the health sector, overcrowding of schools, and a lack of infrastructure to accommodate the influx of IDPs.
>
> In some governorates, the recently-displaced were blamed for an increase in violence. Local authorities in many governorates required security checks for any Iraqi who arrived registered with MoDM [Ministry of Displacement and Migration], IRCS [Iraqi Red Crescent Society], or other entities.[119]

The IOM 2006 Year in Review Report said that 45 percent of IDPs in Iraq wanted to return to their original homes when the security situation improved. The highest number of IDPs wanting to return to their places of origin had relocated to Ninewa, Diyala, Baghdad, and Anbar. Another 25 percent of IDPs decided to integrate into their new communities. This response was most common in the majority Shi'ite south (Basra, 91 percent; Kerbala, 82 percent; and Missan, 76 percent). Finally, 28 percent of IDPs planned on moving on to a third location. This latter response was most common in Babylon (Babil), 77 percent; Qadisiyah, 63 percent; and Wassit, 64 percent.[120] Surprisingly, however, only 1 percent of IDPs did not feel safe in their new location.[121]

As Figure 10.14 shows, the highest priority of IDPs in 2006 in Iraq was finding shelter. The majority of IDPs, 57 percent, rented shelter of some kind in their new location, and 22 percent stayed with family or friends. A large number of those families who originally rented buildings, however, could no longer afford to pay rent after a time and moved into abandoned buildings or makeshift camps. The MOI



Source: "Iraq Displacement: 2006 Year in Review", International Organization for Migration, January 2007, www.moi-iraq.net.

Figure 10.14 Percent Priority Needs of Internally Displaced Persons in 2006

estimated that 10 percent of IDPs in 2006 lived in unoccupied or abandoned public buildings. An additional 7 percent lived in "collective settlements or towns." Regardless of where IDPs found shelter, most cited a lack of essential services and sanitation. Further, 68 percent of IDPs listed access to work as their priority need, reflecting the rising unemployment rate in Iraq.[122]

Aid organizations could not build camps quickly enough to house all of Iraq's displaced: In Babil Province in the town of Mahmudiya, a football stadium was converted into a displaced persons camp; in Kut, the displaced lived in deserted military camps; in Diwaniya, families lived in an abandoned amusement park; and in Najaf, refugees used cemeteries surrounding the city.

In the Shi'ite-dominated south, many Sunni families fled to Sunni neighborhoods in Baghdad or went as far north as Mosul. Mosul reported an increased influx of Sunnis in the latter half of 2006. Similarly, Shi'ites were an anomaly in Anbar Province. Not only could Shi'a not live in the western province, but also it was too dangerous to travel through. The problem arose that Shi'ite traders, truck drivers, and officials were blocked from the land routes to Syria and Jordan. An *ad hoc* system arose in which transport companies would change to Sunni drivers through Anbar, but use Shi'a drivers when traveling out of Anbar toward Baghdad.

The displaced faced what threatened to become a nearly nationwide climate of violence where Sunnis Arab and Shi'ite Arab groups used intimidation and violence to force displacement of the other sect. An example of general intimidation in neighborhoods was threatening graffiti. In Sunni districts it was common to see "No Shi'a after today." In Basra, Shi'a wrote that Sunnis had to leave the city after July 2006. More often, however, intimidation was more personal. Individuals received letters or flyers at their homes telling them to leave. Some people reported receiving threatening text messages and calls on their cell phones—even more unnerving because the opposite sect found their phone numbers. Masked gunmen also made direct house calls, usually at night, telling people to leave the neighborhood. If the above warnings went unheeded, however, one or more family members were abducted, abused, and usually killed.

Many Sunnis blamed the government for this displacement. In heavily Shi'ite areas, such as Basra, Sunnis sited instances in which they lost their government jobs because Shi'ite militias were trying to manipulate local administration.[123]

One of the top destinations for Sunnis fleeing the violence was Fallujah. The U.S. military estimated that in November 2006 about 150 Sunnis arrived from Baghdad. The city was still under tight U.S. military control two years after battles between Coalition forces and insurgents all but emptied the city. At the end of 2006, however, Fallujah was a Sunni safe haven only 40 miles from the violence-torn capital.[124]

The population reached pre-2004 levels of 300,000 by the end of 2006 and the Department of State estimated that well over 40,000 Sunnis fled to Anbar Province in 2006. The majority came from Baghdad, but others traveled from the Shi'ite south to the Sunni safe haven. U.S. troops stationed in Fallujah, many of whom served during the battle for the city in 2004, saw the irony of their new role as "protectors of the Sunnis."

In a busy week in Fallujah, about 1,500 men got coveted ID cards from the Marine outpost. The outpost was manned 24 hours a day by U.S. Marines and included several waiting areas for the hundreds of Sunnis who arrived daily to get the cards that would help them find housing and work in the city. The Marines used infrared retina scanners, fingerprinting, and interviews to ensure that the individuals had not committed a serious criminal act and were not likely to join with al-Qa'ida forces that still attacked the city regularly.

It was in Baghdad, however, where the problem was the most acute. Numerous Sunni families were forced to leave the mostly Shi'ite Hurriyah neighborhood in Baghdad in early December. Shi'ite militias—with affiliation to the Mahdi Army—stormed Hurriyah and ordered the remaining Sunni families to leave or their houses would be burned down. According to Iraqi Army officers, more than 100 families packed a few belongings and fled to Sunni neighborhoods or refugee camps.

Witnesses said that Shi'ite militiamen entered the neighborhood and killed a Sunni man as he was leaving his house. Sunnis families took up arms for protection, but were outnumbered by the Mahdi Army. The militias burned down a few houses before ordering the remaining Sunnis to leave immediately. One Sunni man said that he saw 20 bodies lying in the street after the worst of the sectarian fighting. A Shi'ite witness said that Sunni snipers firing on Shi'ites in the street started the conflict.[125]

Iraqi Army officers tried to convince Sunni families that they would be protected, but most chose to flee. Residents also said that Iraqi police commandos stayed in the neighborhood after the worst of the violence to keep fighters out and protect the remaining residents. One man said that people were nervous with the commandos around because they were believed to be infiltrated by Shi'ite militias, but he said, "For now they are keeping the people separated and the fighters out. Usually they leave after a few days. I hope they stay."[126] The incident resulted in the segregation of one of the last mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad, as well as creating at least 100 new internally displaced persons.

A Mahdi Army leader interviewed by the *Sunday Times* said of Baghdad, "It is a savage place where the wild animals fight for their piece of territory. Each animal wants to take more land than the other." The U.S. military drew a new map of Baghdad to reflect sectarian fault lines. Four of the five most dangerous neighborhoods were west of the Tigris and were the remaining mixed neighborhoods in the capital.

Further, the Iraqi National Security Advisor said, "There is a very clear connection between some of the displacements caused by armed groups in some neighborhoods in and around Baghdad and the political parties that are in the Council of Representatives." A Kurdish Parliamentary member also said, "The religious and political leaders don't seem to have the will to stop [sectarian displacement.] The Islamic party is involved. Al-Mahdi Army does it. These people are fighting each other."

According to the International Organization for Migration the situation in Baghdad had reached the following level by the end of 2006:[127]

- The population of Baghdad was 6.7 million.
- 146,322 Baghdadis were displaced since February 22, 2006.

- 38,766 displaced persons were living in Baghdad.
- 85 percent of displaced persons living in Baghdad were from the capital.
- 72 percent of displaced persons in Baghdad were Shi'a.
- 27 percent of displaced persons in Baghdad were Sunni.
- 17 percent of displaced persons in Baghdad were Yazidi.

An International Crisis Group report said the following of sectarian displacement in Baghdad:

> As described by its inhabitants, the capital is now clearly split between the western bank of the Tigris (al-Kharkh), predominantly Sunni, and its eastern bank (al-Rusafa), primarily Shi'ite. Nevertheless, large minority enclaves remain on both sides. The urban belt surrounding Baghdad is experiencing the same process of sectarian cleansing, with locales now defined as either Sunni or Shi'ite, clear demarcation zones, and, as a result, significantly heightened tensions.[128]

The International Crisis Group report described the neighborhoods of Adhamiya and Kadhamiya as the most sensitive cases because they both lay in the "opposite" sectarian area. Other disputed towns included the Shi'ite city of Samarra—located in a mainly Sunni area—and the Sunni cities of Yusifiya, Mahmudiya, and Iskandariya, which lay in the Shi'ite south.[129]

A map by the *Los Angeles Times* showed the Baghdad neighborhoods that had "undergone dramatic demographic change since the 2003 invasion." The northeastern Shaab, southern Risalah, northwestern Hurriya, and southeastern Zafaraniya neighborhoods had changed from "mixed Shi'ite to majority Shi'ite"; the central Adil, Yarmouk, and Amariya neighborhoods changed from "mixed Sunni to majority Sunni"; the southern Jihad neighborhood changed from "mixed Sunni to majority Shi'ite"; and the southern Dora neighborhood changed from "mixed Christian to majority Sunni."[130]

The accompanying article stated that Shi'ite militias were overpowering Sunni groups in efforts to create sectarian enclaves. In the past, in general terms, to the east of the Tigris River was predominantly Shi'ite and to the west was majority Sunni, but efforts by Shi'ite militias—particularly the Mahdi Army—succeeded in creating Shi'ite majority zones to the west of the Tigris, such as Hurriya and Jihad. The resulting sensation was that Sunnis were being pushed farther and farther west, with many opting to flee to Anbar Province.

The problem in Baghdad was so dire that many displaced families could not find friends or family to stay with. About 1,000 families moved into the former Iraqi Air Defense headquarters and air force club. They lacked basic necessities and it was overcrowded, but they had nowhere else to go. Another family lived in an old hospital that had become a dumping ground. In Kirkuk, 20 percent of those displaced—mostly Kurds seeking to regain lost property—lived in old government buildings and temporary encampments. In Najaf, Shi'ites fleeing Sunni areas relied on religious charities and occupied ex-Ba'ath buildings.

Many internally displaced persons were fleeing violence or had been threatened in their previous location, but others simply could not afford the rent prices that had jumped after the fall of Saddam Hussein. One man working as a security official—one of the few jobs readily available—made about half the amount per month that he would need to rent a home for his family.

There were few government efforts to address the rising housing crisis. The Housing Ministry was building 17 complexes with 500 apartments each across the country for families of those killed by militants, but that would create only 8,500 homes, and it was unclear how the government would determine who exactly was eligible.[131]

Forced relocations were particularly hard on the rising number of widows in Baghdad. They were often told that they would need to move their families by compassionate neighbors of the other sect. Widows never received money for the homes they had to vacate. Most had little success finding jobs in new neighborhoods and only a small percentage received compensation from the government, making the economic toll devastating.[132]

Human Rights Abuses and Civil Conflict

Almost inevitably, the rising tide of sectarian and ethnic cleansing increased other forms of human rights abuses. The September–October 2006 United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) Report on Human Rights stated that extremist groups continued to target ethnic and religious minorities.[133] Violence increased against the Christian minority following controversial comments made by Pope Benedict XVI regarding Muslims on September 12, 2006. Extremists also intimidated Christians into hanging banners condemning the Pope's remarks outside of churches in Iraq. On September 24 and 25 rockets were fired at the Chaldean church in Mosul and an improvised explosive device (IED) exploded inside the doorway. Also in Mosul, clergy said that priests in Iraq were too afraid to wear their clerical robes in public for fear of attacks.

The Sabean-Mandean community reported increased attacks in the early fall of 2006. In October, four Sabean-Mandeans were killed. The minority said that it experienced intimidation and social ostracization from neighbors or peers, but not from the official government of Iraq. Palestinian refugees in Iraq were also targeted. Refugees cited the use of mortars and light weapons to force them to relocate, but many had nowhere else to go and lacked legal documentation, according to the UNAMI report.[134]

Conditions for detainees in Iraq also remained concerning. UNAMI expressed concern that there had been no reduction in the number of detainees held by MNF-I, despite reports of their continuous release. The Human Rights report also cited the worrisome condition of juvenile detainees in Iraq.[135] According to a law passed in March 2005, juvenile detainees should have come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, but due to lack of facilities, juveniles remained in the custody of the Ministry of Justice, which had previously been accused of detainee rights abuses.

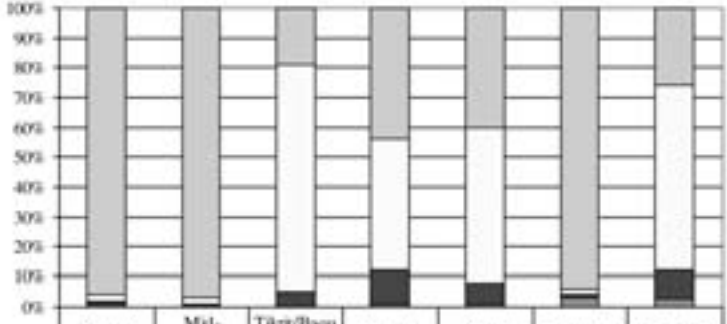
In addition, UNAMI reported that Kurdish militias detained individuals in Kirkuk and transferred them to Kurdistan without notifying proper authorities. An inspection of prisons in the Kurdish region found that some prisoners had "been arrested without judicial intervention; most were arrested under violent circumstances; they had been held without trial for long periods and there had been complaints by family member that prisoners were held at unknown locations."[136]

Iraq Public Opinion on Security

It was scarcely surprising that Iraqis felt increasingly unsafe in their neighborhoods by the end of 2006. The November Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress stated that from information in the Department of State poll, about 60 percent of Iraqis reported worsening security conditions.[137] At a local level, particularly in the south, some Iraqis felt safer, but this was most likely a result of sectarian displacement, as shown in Figure 10.15. Iraqis living in the Tikrit/Baquba area felt the least safe, which corresponds with an increase in sectarian violence in those areas in the fall of 2006.

THE ROLE OF MILITIAS IN THE CIVIL CONFLICT

In Baghdad and areas to the north and south, U.S. and Iraqi sources characterized militias as the largest threat to stability. In an address to the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 15, 2006, David Satterfield, Department of State Coordinator for Iraq, stated, "Sustained sectarian violence, the associated rise in armed



	South	Mid-Euphrates	Tikrit/Baquba	Kirkuk	Mosul	Kurdistan	Baghdad
Very safe	96%	97%	19%	44%	40%	94%	26%
Not very safe	2%	2%	77%	44%	52%	2%	63%
Not at all Safe	1%	1%	5%	11%	7%	1%	9%
DK/NA	1%	-	-	1%	1%	3%	3%

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 25.

Figure 10.15 How Safe Do You Feel in Your Neighborhood?

militias, and other extragovernmental groups are now the greatest threat to a stable, unified, and prosperous Iraq."[138] CENTCOM also labeled the militias as the "largest contributors to sectarian violence in Iraq."[139]

The September–October UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights Report echoed Satterfield's assessment. The report said,

> Much of the violence is carried out by militias and other armed gangs, some purportedly to grant the community protection that cannot be guaranteed by the state law enforcement agencies. Militias and other armed groups are said to be in control of whole areas in the east and west of Baghdad and continue to carry out illegal policing, manning of checkpoints and "dispensation of justice" through illegal trials and extra-judicial executions. They operate with almost total impunity. . . Many victims are kidnapped by militias at improvised checkpoints and then extra-judiciously executed. These tactics have been employed by both Sunni and Shi'a armed groups or militias to various degrees.[140]

The August–November 2006 edition of the "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report by the Department of Defense also stated,

> The most significant development in the Iraqi security environment was the growing role of Shi'a militants. It is likely that Shi'a militants were responsible for more civilian casualties than those associated with terrorist organization. Shi'a militants were the most significant threat to the Coalition presence in Baghdad and southern Iraq.[141]

The *Iraq Study Group Report* said, "Militias are currently seen as legitimate vehicles of political action. . . Sunni insurgents will not lay down arms unless the Shia militias are disarmed. Shia militias will not disarm until the Sunni insurgency is destroyed. To put it simply: there are many armed groups within Iraq, and very little will to lay down army."[142] The bleak assessment by the panel gave little hope that the level of violence would decrease any time soon. The report stated that 4 of the 18 provinces were "highly insecure"—Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala, and Salladdin. Those four provinces accounted for about 40 percent of the population.[143]

An International Crisis Group report in late December raised similar issues:

> Notwithstanding repeated US proclamations of yet another turning point or milestone, the unremitting and sustained level of violence has amply demonstrated that it has become self-sustained, immune to episodic military achievements by American forces or to apparent political advances by the Iraqis themselves. Clearly, the violence was triggered, and is now both fuelled and contained by the US military presence. But by now the conflict has developed its own, intrinsic dynamic, together with the means to reproduce and perpetuate itself.
>
> The self-reinforcing cycle of violence has several explanations. The armed groups' and militias' most important source of legitimacy and power has become the conflict's very radicalization: the more they can point to the extreme violence of the other, the more they can justify their own in terms of protection (of one's community) and revenge (against another). In the absence of a state apparatus capable of safeguarding the population, civilians are caught in a vicious cycle in which they must rely on armed groups. The

more the situation deteriorates, the easier it is for these groups to command loyalty and mobilize their political and social constituency: fear of the "other" has, in essence, become their most valuable asset. The stronger the Sunni radicals become, the stronger become the Shiite radicals. And vice versa.

Since 2006 in particular, the armed opposition has focused its propaganda on crimes committed against Sunni Arabs, thereby encouraging a siege mentality and promoting its own role as protector of the oppressed population. Shiite militias similarly legitimate their actions by highlighting both the state's deficiency and their resulting responsibility to protect civilians. In short, violence spawns the symbolic resources that its perpetrators need.

This dynamic is clearly manifested in the groups' behavior. At one level, all sides claim to be targeting narrowly defined, fanatical and brutal enemies who can only be dealt with violently. For the most part, none of the Sunni insurgent groups—not even the jihadis—publicly claims responsibility for attacks against Shiite civilians.[144]

Officials estimated that 23 militias operated in Baghdad in the early fall and that most of them were Shi'ite. In mid-October Iraqi and U.S. officials said that the number of militias in Baghdad was increasing and that they were "splintering into smaller, more radicalized cells."[145] In some parts of the capital, residents had starting blaming smaller militias and criminal gangs for kidnappings and attacks rather than the Mahdi Army or Badr Organization. Shi'ites explained that joblessness and frustration was driving young men to form the rogue death squads. U.S. commanders said that in some ways the news was good because it meant a less cohesive movement, but at the same time it made it difficult to identify and isolate militia members.[146]

Al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army

Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army presented the largest Shi'ite threat in the intensifying civil war. Moqtada al-Sadr, whose father once professed the unity of all Islam, found himself increasingly drawn into the sectarian conflict. The breakup of the Mahdi Army into rogue elements, however, may be reason to doubt al-Sadr's ability to maintain his political base. Prime Minister al-Maliki said of the Mahdi Army, "We don't know what the Mahdi Army means anymore. Some Sunnis now operate in the name of the Mahdi Army and dress in black as well. Ba'athists also, and foreign intelligence." Al-Maliki emphasized that he would continue to work with al-Sadr to find a political solution to the violence. But al-Sadr's inability to control rogue militias and the blurred distinction between Mahdi militiamen would make the political dialogue futile.

Reporting on the number of militia fighters in the Mahdi Army and other death squads varied greatly, and it remained unclear at the end of 2006 how many fighters were involved in the daily sectarian violence. Some reporting now estimated the size of the militia to be greater than 200,000. The exact number was largely unknown. A senior U.S. intelligence official estimated that the Mahdi Army had grown eightfold in 2006 and maintained 40,000 to 60,000 militiamen at the end of the year.[147] Other reports estimated that there were 10,000 fighters in 2005 and close to

60,000 in 2006.[148] Another source said that the militia had 6,000 to 10,000 fighters in Baghdad.

What was clear, however, was that violence spread from Baghdad to surrounding provinces—primarily Salahaddin, Diyala, Maysan, and Basra—in October and November, involving more Iraqis in reprisal attacks and forcing civilians to turn to militias and neighborhood gangs for protection.

The August–November Department of Defense Stability and Security Report in Iraq said the following about the Mahdi Army:

> The group that is currently having the greatest negative affect on the security situation in Iraq is Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), which has replaced al-Qaeda in Iraq as the most dangerous accelerant of potentially self-sustaining sectarian violence in Iraq. JAM exerts significant influence in Baghdad and the southern provinces of Iraq and on the Government of Iraq. JAM receives logistical support from abroad, and most, but not all, elements of the organization take direction from Muqtada al-Sadr. JAM and Badr Organization members periodically attack one another and are political rivals.[149]

The unity of the Mahdi Army, however, was far from clear. A senior intelligence official said in late September 2006 that portions of the Mahdi Army splintered off into freelance death squads and were not heeding al-Sadr's calls for restraint. The officials believed that six major leaders had ventured beyond the control of al-Sadr, although most still were said to be part of the Mahdi Army. These rogue elements saw al-Sadr as "accommodating to the US" and "bound by politics."[150]

At the end of September al-Sadr ordered his followers to temporarily put down their weapons and cease attacks. Some analysts saw this as an effort to distance himself from former followers who were no longer loyal. Others argued it was merely an attempt to buy time in the face of increasing pressure from Iraqi and Coalition forces. In either case, he issued four directives to his commanders:[151]

- Reduce the size of units to 75 fighters from as many as 400 to make the units more manageable.
- Issue new identification cards to Mahdi Army members to replace IDs that had been forged.
- Send every member to an orientation course that would outline the group's mission.
- Lay down weapons temporarily.

Some aspects of the Mahdi Army's role in perpetuating the civil conflict increasingly seemed to be related to al-Sadr's lack of direct control over the military wing. Al-Sadr again said in October 2006 that he would denounce any members of the Mahdi Army who killed Iraqis. He stated, "There are rumors that there are groups or persons from the Mahdi Army [that] are attacking the Iraqi people with no right to do so. It is not proved so far but, if proved, I will declare their names and will renounce them with no fear or hesitation."[152] He encouraged his militiamen to use Ramadan as a period to repent, rather than as a month of increased sectarian

attacks.[153] He also urged the Mahdi Army to help return displaced Iraqis, both Sunnis and Shi'ites, to their homes, using "peaceful and diplomatic methods."[154]

In a November 15 address to the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, confirmed that clandestine Mahdi elements operated outside of al-Sadr's control. He also said, "Sadr continues to refuse any discussion of disbanding his militia."[155]

Following the November 23 bombing attack in Sadr City that killed upwards of 200 people, the Mahdi Army took control of the streets and blamed the U.S. and Iraqi governments for the sectarian violence. Al-Sadr also called on the Sunni Sheikh Harith al-Dhari, Head of the Association of Muslim Scholars, to issue fatwas condemning sectarian killings. He said that one fatwa should "prohibit the killing of all Shi'ite Muslims because this will save the blood of Muslims in Iraq," and another should prohibit Sunnis from joining forces with al-Qa'ida in Iraq.[156]

Residents in Sadr City reported that the Mahdi Army garnered significant political support in its handling of the aftermath of the bombings. Residents said that the Mahdi Army moved the wounded and killed, set up checkpoints, and provided food, clothing, medical supplies, and cash to families of the deceased and wounded. Shi'ites stated that they saw no evidence of U.S. or Iraqi soldiers helping and most said they would pledge support for the Mahdi Army in the future because they did all the things that the Iraqi government could not do. A Mahdi militiaman said that he thought the militia would be impossible to dismantle because it was the only source of support that could be trusted for many poor Shi'ites.[157]

Reprisal attacks and nightly executions by the Mahdi Army, however, were only part of the story, and it was also clear that some of the more independent elements of the Mahdi militia cooperated with different factions in sectarian cleansing. Mahdi militiamen used intimidation, threats, kidnapping, and corruption in their roles in government ministries to push opposing sects out of contested areas.

As al-Sadr lost control of his militia, localized factions came to provide security for more and more Shi'ites throughout Iraq. The militia offered employment to young men, provided support to families who lost members to violence and offered reprisal, successively controlled key governmental ministries—which also in part funded the movement through corruption—and promised political power. These developments contributed to the large growth of membership in al-Sadr's movement and Shi'ite sectarian control of economic and political space in southern Iraq and much of Baghdad.

Shi'ite Militia Tactics

Shi'ite militia tactics shifted somewhat in the early fall of 2006, but continued the same trends that had been used since the February Samarra mosque bombing. In October 2006, the U.S. military and Iraqi morgue officials said that 90 percent of the sectarian killings were done in execution-style, after the victim was kidnapped and tortured. Most of the bodies were left on the streets during the night and found by police or civilians in the morning. But an article by the *Washington Post* stated that

in the early fall militias increasingly used staked out "dumping fields" to dispose of the bodies in Baghdad. The U.S. military said that oftentimes the ISF refused to go to the dumping grounds to collect bodies, making it hard to ascertain the number killed.[158]

In addition to execution-style killings, militias launched several attacks on entire Iraqi towns. The Mahdi Army traveled to Balad on October 14 to join in the reprisal killings of Sunnis. Residents said that for several days following the attack, Mahdi militiamen controlled the city. The sectarian killings in Baghdad were the most gruesome and deadly tactic used by Shi'ite militias, but the ability to control a large town within a day showed the full extent of the Mahdi Army's power and influence.

In the neighborhood of Hurriya in northwestern Baghdad, the Madhi Army forced Sunni families to leave. A U.S. Army intelligence officer in Baghdad said that in Hurriya, "[The Mahdi Army] infiltrated every branch of public service and political office they could get their hands on." To force Sunni families to leave, the intelligence officer said that Mahdi Army militiamen painted a red "X" on Sunni homes. Residents then had only a few days to collect their belongings and leave, or face the deadly consequences.[159]

Shi'ite militias also started using the Internet as a tactic in the early fall of 2006. Shi'ite death squads began posting their execution lists on Web sites. *Newsweek* reported that at least eight Web sites existed with execution information on victims' occupations and addresses.[160] Coalition and Iraqi forces were having enough trouble curtailing sectarian violence on the ground in the fall of 2006, let alone in cyberspace.

Militias continued to use fake checkpoints to kidnap large numbers of people. A U.S. military official said that Mahdi Army members would detain as many as 60 people in a checkpoint sweep, release those who were Shi'ite, and mass execute the rest. The official also warned that the Mahdi Army had acquired rockets capable of shooting down aircraft and explosives capable of penetrating armor.[161]

In addition, the U.S. military reported that Coalition troops were increasingly targeted by the Mahdi Army, despite the fact that al-Sadr issued a statement calling for nonviolent resistance.[162] In the first two weeks of October, almost 60 U.S. troops were killed.[163] The increase was in accordance with a WorldPublicOpinion.org poll conducted in early September that found six out of ten Shi'ites supported attacks on U.S. troops.[164]

Infiltration of Iraqi Security Forces and the Ministry of Interior

Shi'ite politicians loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr, SCIRI, and other Shi'ite parties continued to openly or quietly support their respective militias and intimidate Iraqi police into allowing the armed groups to control the streets. The exact level of militia infiltration into the MOI forces was difficult to discern in the fall of 2006. Militias could easily acquire police uniforms and equipment on the black market or through intimidation. U.S. and Iraqi troops often found government-issued weapons or badges at attack sites. But the MOI publicly denied a role in all militia attacks. The

problem was more that police failed to hinder militia attacks and let militiamen through checkpoints. Sunnis, however, asserted that security forces played a more active role.

In one incident on October 1, 2006, gunmen kidnapped 26 workers from a refrigerated food factory in western Baghdad. The kidnapped workers were mostly Sunnis. Police found ten of the bodies dumped in Baghdad the following day. The U.S. military attributed the kidnappings to Shi'ite militias. Iraq's largest Sunni party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, questioned the MOI about how victims from west Baghdad could get to the city center without being stopped at checkpoints. Sunnis charged Iraqi police with tolerating militias and, in some cases, even helping them get by checkpoints.[165]

Iraq's interior minister said that the majority of death squad members caught by U.S. and Iraqi forces had no ties to the government. The small number who did work for the MOI was part of the Facilities Protection Service (FPS). FPS is a large force of 150,000 guards, but has little governmental oversight.[166] The *Washington Post* also reported, "U.S. military commanders acknowledge that the agency has mushroomed to more than 140,000, largely outside American notice. A top former U.S. military commander has said militia fighters under the Facilities Protection Service are tied to kidnappings, execution-style killings and other crimes."[167]

Government Efforts to Combat the Militia Problem

Al-Maliki did take some steps to curtail militia activity, although these often seemed designed to placate the United States and Britain and/or control "rogue" and extremist elements and to reduce the spread of Shi'ite activity and forces. The prime minister expressed concerns that the military force would only alienate and spur on the militias, and he insisted that U.S. commanders forewarn him of any planned attacks into militia-controlled areas. Al-Maliki's spokesman said, "Our fear is that the Americans will treat Al Mahdi army and other militias the same way that they treat the Saddamists and the terrorists. We don't want to solve this problem with military force."

In September 2006, some U.S. soldiers warned that they thought militia forces outnumbered Iraqi security forces. What was more troubling, however, was they noted that al-Sadr enjoyed greater support in the capital than did the police.[168]

In an initiative to curb the use of MOI vehicles, weapons, and uniforms by insurgents, the Iraqi government started identifying official vehicles and issuing new and different uniforms, according to U.S. Army Col. Thomas Vail in an address on September 1, 2006.[169] The new uniforms were officially put to use on October 9, 2006. The new police garb featured camouflaged pants—similar to that worn by the U.S. military—that would be difficult to counterfeit. The uniforms had serial numbers that would be linked in a computer database to photo IDs of the officers to whom they were issued. Police vehicles were also outfitted with new identification numbers. The goal of the new equipment was to reduce the ability of sectarian militias to create counterfeit uniforms and vehicles. U.S. military officials said that they hoped the items would help increase civilian trust in the Iraqi security forces.[170]

On October 4, the MOI announced that the 700-policeman brigade responsible for security in the area where the 26 Sunni food factory workers were kidnapped would be pulled out of service and investigated. U.S. military spokesman Major General Caldwell said, "There was some possible complicity in allowing death squad elements to move freely when they should have been impeding them. The forces in the unit have not put their full allegiance to the government of Iraq and gave their allegiance to others."[171] The decommissioning was the first of its kind and showed that al-Maliki's government was beginning to respond to urges by the U.S. military to rid security forces of sectarian militias.[172]

In late October, a spokesman for the MOI said that 3,000 employees had been fired since May 2006, 600 of which would face prosecution. He also announced that the ministry would reshuffle top commanders in an attempt to rid the government of militia complacency.[173] It was unclear, however, if these steps were ever taken.

Internal Shi'ite Tensions

The growth of Shi'ite political power and increased anti-Sunni activity by the various Shi'ite militias did not prevent Shi'ite leaders from becoming increasingly divided along party and militia lines, although the individual Shi'ite parties had their own divisions by leader and many elements of the militias operated on their own or outside any clear central hierarchy controlled by the party leadership.

An incident in Amara in Maysan Province made these issues very clear. On October 19, a roadside bomb—attributed to the Mahdi Army—killed the head of police intelligence and member of the Badr Organization. The officer's family then kidnapped the brother of a local Mahdi Army leader in retaliation. In response, about 800 Mahdi militiamen seized control of police stations in Amara—exploding three of them—installed checkpoints around the city, and patrolled the streets, ordering residents to stay inside. Fifteen Iraqis—including four civilians—were killed and at least 60 were wounded in the fighting.

The British Army had left Amara in August to patrol the Iraq-Iran border. Residents in the town reported that since the British left, the militias had returned and infiltrated the police forces and local government. The fighting was eventually controlled when some 230 British troops returned to Amara. In addition, Prime Minister al-Maliki sent an emergency security delegation of top officials to make sure the situation did not escalate further.[174] Al-Sadr also sent a delegation to the city, which broadcast messages from the cleric telling militiamen to lay down their arms, but witnesses said the call for calm was unheeded.[175] U.S. and British officials continued to state that southern Iraq was free from the sectarian violence engulfing Baghdad, but intense Shi'ite rivalries made it clear that the south had not been "won"—if winning meant establishing some kind of national unity.

Al-Sadr's militia did not hold as much power and prestige in the south as it did in Sadr City, but the power of SCIRI and the Badr Organization was noticeably waning. In mosques where SCIRI leaders and Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani's portraits hung, Moqtada al-Sadr's picture joined them in 2006. Mahdi militiamen created

"popular protection committees" to watch over blocks, just as they did in Sadr City. Older Shi'ites in Karrada still saw Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani as the leader of Shi'ites and heeded his calls for calm, but the Mahdi Army had clearly grown in appeal to the younger generation of Shi'ites.[176]

The two rival Shi'ite groups clashed again in late December in the southern city of Samawa in Shi'ite-controlled Muthanna Province. Police in Samawa, most of whom were loyal to SCIRI, were fighting a renegade branch of the Mahdi Army. The conflict started on December 1 when several Mahdi gunmen tried to break into a local prison and killed three people in the process. A cease-fire was signed, but fighting broke out three weeks later. In the latter violence, nine people were killed, including four policemen, and the Iraqi Army had to be called in to help.[177]

CHANGES IN THE NATURE OF THE SUNNI INSURGENCY

The shifting dynamic of civil conflict drove the Sunni Islamists as much as they sought to drive events and led to ongoing changes in the Sunni insurgency. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq and its umbrella organization, the Mujahedeen Shura Council, sought to unite components of the Sunni insurgency. Sectarian conflict had become the driving force in Iraqi violence by mid-2006, and the insurgency had already changed from a focus on tactical victories against U.S.–led forces to one against other sectarian groups for control of economic and political space. This evolution now defined the "war after the war," and it was clear that the choices Iraqis made as to whether to support sectarian groups or reach some form of compromise would ultimately determine the outcome.

The insurgency did, however, continue to present a serious threat to Coalition forces as well as Iraqi targets. In a November 15, 2006, report to Congress, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency said, "The Sunni Arab-based insurgency has gained strength and capacity despite political progress and security force developments. Nationwide, insurgents still conduct most attacks against the Coalition and ISF and retain the resources, capabilities, and support to sustain high levels of violence."[178]

The August–November "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report by the Department of Defense discussed Sunni insurgents and armed groups:[179]

- Sunni terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda in Iraq and Ansar al-Sunnah, are engaged in a religiously motivated conflict to end "foreign occupation" and to marginalize the Shi'a.
- High profile terrorist attacks are most often attributed to al-Qaeda in Iraq, whose goals include instigating sectarian violence. Al-Qaeda in Iraq and the affiliated Mujahadeen Shura Council consist of both foreigners and Iraqis motivated by an extremist Sunni Islamic ideology and seek to establish an Islamic Caliphate in Iraq. The emergence of Abu Ayub al-Masri as leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq demonstrated its flexibility and depth, as well as its reliance on non-Iraqis. Al-Masri benefited from detailed knowledge of former al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's planning as well as his own

extensive operational experience, allowing him to carry forward many of his predecessor's existing strategies. Al-Masri has attempted to set the tone for the Iraqi jihad and to solidify the perception of continued strong leadership within al-Qaeda in Iraq. Since al-Masri assumed leadership, al-Qaeda in Iraq has continued its main strategy of instigating sectarian violence using high profile attacks against Shi'a civilians.

- Ansar al-Sunnah is a mostly indigenous terrorist group with similar goals. However, Ansar al-Sunnah objects to al-Qaeda in Iraq's indiscriminate targeting of Iraqis.
- The New Ba'ath Party, the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade, and Jaysh Muhammad are the most prominent Sunni Rejectionist groups. To date, Sunni Rejectionists—also known as the Sunni Resistance—have exhibited limited interest in Prime Minister Maliki's National Reconciliation and Dialogue Project. These groups attack Coalition and Iraqi forces to try and get Coalition forces to withdraw and to regain a privileged status in a Sunni dominated Iraq. Sunni Rejectionists target Coalition forces at higher rates than Shi'a militia groups do. Most of the Rejectionist insurgents will probably continue attacking Coalition forces as long as the Coalition remains in Iraq, and the Rejectionists are likely to increase attacks against Shi'a dominated ISF as they assume greater responsibility. . .
- Sunni Arabs do not have a formally organized, national level militia. Sunni, especially in heavily mixed areas like Baghdad, rely on neighborhood watches and other local armed elements to provide security in neighborhoods and areas where they perceive Iraqi institutions and forces are unwilling or unable to meet security requirements. Attacks on the Sunni population by Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), and the presence of Badr Organization and JAM members in the Iraqi Police Service and the National Police, contribute to Sunni concerns about persecution. High levels of sectarian violence are driving some Sunni neighborhood watch organization in Baghdad to transform into militias with limited offensive capabilities.

An International Crisis Group report summarized the impact of such changes in a similar way:

> Having established a fertile haven in Iraq, jihadism has been metastasizing and spreading. Much as, at the outset, so-called Arab Afghans such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi helped import jihadism to Iraq, insurgent skills, methods and discourse are now being developed in and exported out of Iraq. Suicide attacks or the use of more sophisticated improvised explosive devises are known to have made their way to Afghanistan. It is not so much that Iraq harbors insurgent training camps, although the armed opposition claims that to be the case. Rather, the war gave insurgents the opportunity to elaborate relatively sophisticated military doctrines, more flexible, effective and capable of being adapted to other conflict zones. Actively engaged in propaganda and proselytisation, the armed groups have set up highly developed means of communication that are being duplicated elsewhere. Moreover, the various transnational networks once formed to bolster the jihadi insurgency in Iraq—involving the transfer of both funds and fighters—are now operating in reverse direction, presenting a serious threat to neighboring countries.[180]

The Coalition and the MNF-I continued to "win" tactical victories in spite of the changes in the insurgency, although they made little if any progress in their ability to

"hold" or "build." The MNF-I announced in late November that since 2004, Coalition forces captured over 7,000 al-Qa'ida in Iraq operatives, and 30 senior level al-Qa'ida were caught since July 2006. U.S. spokesman Major General Caldwell said that the debriefings of al-Qa'ida members led the U.S. military to conclude that al-Qa'ida in Iraq had the following three main goals:[181]

- The first goal, as they have stated to us in the briefings, is controlling the Sunni population. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq is looking to dominate Baghdad. They hope to convince the Sunni people that resistance to unity is a realistic goal and that al-Qa'ida in Iraq is the best avenues for sectarian-based resistance. Part of this strategy, they told us, is that [of] murder and intimidation of Sunnis who are brave and foresighted enough to work towards reconciliation.
- Their second goal is to weaken the Iraqi government. A strong and unified and representative Iraqi government that is the only legitimate authority to terrorism, they want to weaken. So al-Qa'ida in Iraq consistently looks to destroy faith in the democratically elected representatives of the Iraqi people. It seeks to achieve this through constant attacks against public servants and those who may serve with them. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq aims to make Sunnis fear [being] cooperative with their own government. They want to convince people that hope is misplaced, that the government cannot offer security or stability.
- The third goal they stated in these debriefings is to attack Shi'a civilians. Al-Qa'ida seeks to divide. They do this by targeting Shi'a, by seeking to create distrust and fear in order to incite retribution. We know that al-Qa'ida in Iraq has issued orders to attack the Shi'a population. The attacks in Sadr City last week were a vivid reminder of al-Qa'ida in Iraq's strategy of executing high-visibility, high-casualty producing attacks against civilian targets in order to sow division among Iraqis along sectarian lines.

A More United Insurgency?

It was now clear that the death of al-Zarqawi in June 2006 had not crippled the insurgency. A September Government Accountability Office (GAO) report supported a Department of Defense transcript that stated that al-Qa'ida in Iraq continued to operate after al-Zarqawi's death due to its "resilient, semi-autonomous cellular structure of command and control."[182] It appeared, in fact, that Masri was trying to unite the Iraqi insurgency in a way that al-Zarqawi had not, with the end goal being more intense civil conflict.

In early October the U.S. military released the translation of an al-Qa'ida letter to al-Zarqawi, recovered at site of his death. The letter appeared to have been written in December 2005 by a man who called himself Atiyah—thought to be a senior al-Qa'ida leader. The letter expressed the need for "steadfastness" in the jihad and that the longer the war in Iraq continued the better. The letter also urged al-Zarqawi to reduce attacks against other Sunni opposition leaders. Atiyah said that al-Qa'ida in Iraq should strive to unite Sunnis against the occupation—dividing Sunni tribes could lead to a devastating lack of support for al-Qa'ida in Iraq's mission.

The letter was released a week after a speech by al-Masri was posted on an al-Qa'ida in Iraq Web site. Al-Masri offered Sunni tribal leaders amnesty if they joined al-Qa'ida in Iraq. He said al-Qa'ida needed the help of all Sunnis—particularly religious leaders and scientists—and that they should unite together against the occupation. It appeared that al-Masri was taking the advice given to al-Zarqawi to heart.

Sunni tribal leaders, however, did not respond in kind to al-Masri's recruitment video. On Al Jazeera TV, the Secretary General of the Association of Muslim Scholars said in response to al-Masri's offer of amnesty, "This issue is the business of al-Qa'ida and its leader and is none of our business." He affirmed that his group opposed the "occupation," but he rejected al-Qa'ida's indiscriminate killing of Iraqi civilians.[183]

The head of the Salahaddin Tribes Council, Ahmad Naji Jibarah al-Juburi, also commented on al-Qa'ida's September message as follows:

> Iraq is our Iraq; it does not belong under the leader of the al-Qa'ida organization who came and entered Iraq to liberate it from the occupation. He did not come to liberate Iraq from its own people. WE are the people of Iraq, and he wants to liberate us, which means that he wants to eliminate us and make Iraq a wasteland void of its people and citizens. . .Al- Qa'ida helps the occupiers to divide and tear Iraq to shreds.[184]

The more "nationalist" insurgents considered al-Qa'ida a foreign presence, not a legitimate means for the Sunnis to regain power. Al-Qa'ida's continued attacks against Iraqi civilians, including the Sunni tribes, and the group's unchecked use of violent and repressive tactics in the name of Islam intensified the conflict between these insurgent groups.

The "Islamic State of Iraq"

The Mujahedeen Shura Council, which was created in early 2006, continued to expand in spite of tensions between the insurgent groups. It absorbed ten additional Sunni armed groups by the end of the year. In October, the Mujahedeen Shura Council announced the creation of an "Islamic State of Iraq." The Islamic State claimed territory in the Sunni areas of Baghdad and Kirkuk, the provinces of Anbar, Diyala, Salah al-Din, Ninewa, and parts of Babil and Wasit. Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi was declared the symbolic emir of the Islamic State.

Some of the groups that joined the Mujahedeen Shura Council and Islamic State in 2006 included the Society of True Believers, Supporters of Monotheism and Our Creed, the Knights of Monotheism, the Army of the Abrahamic Tradition, the Army of the Prophet's Companions, and the Army of the Conquerors, which broke from the Islamic Army in Iraq. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq clearly dominated both the Mujahedeen Shura Council and the "Islamic State of Iraq." The Islamic Army in Iraq, the Mujahedeen Army, and the Ansar al Sunna Army also maintained loose affiliations to the al-Qa'ida network.[185]

In an Internet video in late 2006 al-Baghdadi claimed that 70 percent of tribal sheiks aligned themselves with the Islamic State.[186] It was impossible to determine

the legitimacy of that claim, although later fighting between al-Qa'ida and trival leaders in Anbar indicate it was greatly inflated. Al-Baghdadi also invited former members of Saddam's army to join his forces to fight against the "occupation"; the call came only a week after Prime Minister al-Maliki invited ex-Ba'athist army members to join the new security forces. Any army member under the rank of major was eligible if he could recite passages form the Koran and pass a test on Islamic law. Al-Baghdadi told Sunnis to continue opposing the rule in Baghdad and the government's attempts at reconciliation with Sunnis. The video clip also stated that governors had been appointed in Sunni-dominated areas and that Islamic law was imposed at the "request of the people themselves."[187]

While al-Baghdadi's statement was propaganda, the "Islamic State of Iraq" had clearly garnered some Sunni support and could present a greater problem to the Coalition and the Iraqi government. There was increasing evidence that in Anbar Province, however, Sunni tribes opposed the indiscriminate killing by al-Qa'ida and did not support a Sunni region under Islamic law.

Sunni Tribal Politics

AQI's brutal tactics and repressive ideology fostered growing resentment among Sunni Arabs against the group and similar jihadist organizations as early as 2004. In the middle of September 2006, tribal leaders from 25 of some 31 tribes in Anbar Province met and announced that they were joining forces to fight insurgents, both native and foreign, in their province. The group called themselves the "Al-Anbar Salvation Council." The *New York Times* reported that one tribal leader estimated the force of the united tribes at 30,000 armed men. After agreeing to unite, the leaders sent a letter to Prime Minister al-Maliki looking for support.[188]

Despite such recognition of a common enemy, broader agreement between the Sunni tribal leaders and other groups in Iraq remained elusive. In a meeting with members of al-Maliki's government, tribal leaders made a variety of demands including the canceling of plans for federal regions, proclaiming Iraq as an Arab nation, and insisting on an equitable distribution of oil revenues. These demands clashed with the plans and desires of both the Shi'a or Kurdish leadership. Despite differences, Iraqi government personnel expressed optimism that by focusing on each side's most important demands common ground could be found.[189]

On October 17, Shaykh Sattar Buzay Abu-Rishah, head of al-Anbar Salvation Council, said that three regiments from the tribes were ready to be deployed. Each regiment included 200–300 volunteers from each tribe. He added that the troops had been formed with the supervision of Interior Minister Jawad al-Bulani and Maj. Gen. Ahmad al-Juburi, the Ministry's Under-Secretary.[190]

In mid-December 2006 the first class of Iraqi policemen recruited by the sheiks in Anbar graduated. Police enlistments in Ramadi had increased from less than 100 to the quota of 400 a month since September. U.S. forces even created a special Emergency Response Unit to accommodate the excess volunteers.

Further, membership in the tribal organization rose to 60 tribal leaders. U.S. troops were hopeful that the new police force would help stop the constant flow of al-Qa'ida attacks in Anbar and bring the Sunnis closer to the political process. The military said that since the deal, attacks by local resistance fighters in Anbar dropped 40 percent, but attacks against U.S. troops did not appear to fall; Anbar still accounted for the majority of U.S. fatalities at the end of 2006.[191]

One tribal sheik said that his "forces" had significantly reduced the number of weapons and foreign fighters in Anbar, but that there were thousands of al-Qa'ida fighters left in Anbar alone. He said that al-Qa'ida was responsible for 30 to 40 percent of the insurgency in Iraq. He believed that many al-Qa'ida fighters and weapons came from the neighboring countries of Syria and Saudi Arabia.[192]

While cooperation between U.S. forces and former Sunni insurgents could be characteriszed as a fragile and a temporary alliance of convenience at best, the positional shift of Sunni tribes in Iraq may prove to be a crucial factor in efforts to stabilize more violent Iraqi provinces such as Anbar, and possibly serve to curtail AQI operations and influence in the region and the country.

Evolving Tactics

Sunni Arab insurgents continued to refine tactics that had worked well throughout the war: mass kidnappings, mass bombings, kidnappings of Iraqi professionals/government workers, targeting Iraqi security forces, and body dumps. At the same time they adapted new tactics to try to stay one step ahead of U.S.–led forces.

Tactical battles with U.S.– or Shi'ite-controlled security forces, however, were only a means to an end. The Sunni insurgents, like the armed groups from other sects, were fighting for control of the population. Their goal was to gain control of political and economic space. The growth of the Muhahedeen Shura Council, and more prolific support for an Islamic State of Iraq, indicated that the insurgency recognized the importance of gaining the political and economic support of Sunni tribes across the country.

Anbar Province remained a key center of Sunni activity, fueled in part by the mass arrival of Sunni refugees pushed out of Baghdad and southern Iraq by soft sectarian cleansing, but Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mosul, and large sections of Diyala Province were ethnically diverse and highly contested.

In his speech to the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 15, Lt. Gen. Michael D. Maples, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), said, "Al-Qa'ida in Iraq's targeting strategies have not changed significantly in the wake of al-Zarqawi's death on 7 June, and attacks against Iraqi government targets and Coalition forces continue apace." He also said that al-Qa'ida in Iraq tried to "sow sectarian tension and undermine confidence in democracy." The Director of the DIA concluded that al-Qa'ida in Iraq still "operates with relative freedom in Iraq's Sunni-dominated territories."[193]

Urban warfare in Baghdad increasingly was shaped by snipers and hidden IEDs. Trash collectors found bombs on a regular basis hidden beneath the mounds of trash

in the capital. In another attack seven bicycles, with detonators hidden under the seats, exploded in a Shi'ite market, killing 17.[194] Snipers also became much more effective and accurate. It was these shifting tactics that U.S. and Iraqi forces found so difficult to anticipate and prevent.

The *New York Times* reported that Sunni insurgents with ties to al-Qa'ida started attacking Coalition forces using more conventional tactics. In mid-November U.S. forces fought insurgents in the town of Turki, in Diyala Province. U.S. commanders said that the Sunni insurgents deployed a platoon-sized unit and stood and fought in "perfect military formation" and "were disciplined and well trained, with well-aimed shots."[195]

The insurgents built trenches and had stored caches, including antiaircraft missiles. After two days of pitched battles, U.S. forces called in airstrikes. At least 72 insurgents were killed as were two American officers, but the conventional military battle surprised U.S. forces who were accustomed to hunting down single insurgents after a sniper attack or a car bomb explosion. The U.S. military said it suspected that several training grounds for insurgents existed in rural Diyala Province.[196]

The War for Political and Economic Space

The number of bombings or IED attacks by Sunni insurgents was only part of the larger and more important picture of control of political and economic space. The more unified insurgency and the "Islamic State" had the potential to gain the support of the broader Sunni community. Continued intimidation campaigns against Sunnis who complied with U.S. forces or the Shi'ite government and a lack of employment opportunities also maintained the undrainable swamp of young Sunni recruits. Moderate Sunnis increasingly saw the Shi'ite-led government as unwilling to compromise with Sunnis on any issues, and therefore they were swayed to give their economic and political support to the insurgency.

The insurgents also tailored their economic attacks to encourage the conditions for civil war, and once again electricity supply provides a case study example. In the last six months of 2006, insurgents succeeded in their tactic of electrically isolating Baghdad. Insurgents attacked towers in the deserts to the north and south of the capital, where they could easily kill repair crews. The attacks were particularly devastating because they brought almost all the power to Baghdad from the energy-rich north and south. Looters also removed much of the valuable steel and aluminum from the towers and sold it on the black market—making repairs even more difficult.

Electricity officials said that in March 2006 only one or two lines were down, but by summer that number had risen to six or seven. The most devastating attack came on July 6 when insurgents targeted all the lines at the same time, and the government was unable to reverse the damage. The typical insurgent strategy was to explode the four support joints on a single tower, which would bring down three others when it fell. On December 17 insurgents downed 40 towers running into Baghdad from the power plant in Beiji and 42 more connecting Beiji to Kirkuk.

The Iraqi Electricity Minister said, "Now Baghdad is almost isolated. We almost don't have any power coming from outside." He stated that seven of nine lines supplying Baghdad were down due to insurgent attacks and lack of repairs. He also could not think of any cause in which the insurgents had been caught. The ministry had tried to make monetary arrangements with tribes in return for security of the lines, but they had all been ineffective.

THE CONTINUING ROLE OF FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS

U.S. and Iraqi joint raids continued to find foreign fighters, although most fighters, and a rising percentage of suicide bombers, were Iraqi. In the first major announcement from insurgents in Iraq on their losses, al-Masri said in an audio message that more than 4,000 foreign insurgent fighters had been killed in Iraq since the U.S.–led invasion in 2003.[197]

In a November 19, 2006, briefing, Major General Caldwell also said that on average 50–70 foreign fighters were crossing the Syrian border a month. He also said that Iraqi security forces and Coalition forces had killed about 425 fighters in 2006 and captured 670 through November 10. Roughly 20 percent of the foreign fighters came from Syria, 20 percent came from Egypt, 12 percent came from Saudi Arabia, and 13 percent came from Sudan.[198]

General Abizaid, Commander of CENTCOM, maintained that the most foreign fighters flowed to Iraq and Iraq remained the hotbed for al-Qa'ida activity.[199] Gen. Michael Hayden, Director of the CIA, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that only a "small fraction" of those killed in Iraq were foreign fighters. He estimated that the figure was slightly greater than 3 percent and that Iraqis themselves were perpetrating the rest of the violence in Iraq. General Hayden stated that the overall number of foreign fighters in Iraq was 1,300.[200]

U.S. and Iraqi forces did continue to find and arrest foreign fighters in Iraq on an intermittent basis. For example, on January 6, 2007, U.S. and Iraqi forces arrested five Sudanese fighters on Haifa Street in Baghdad. Three days later, Iraqi and U.S. forces again came under attack from militants on Haifa Street and arrested 11 people, including 7 Syrians.[201]

Financing the Insurgency

Financing the war was not a key problem for any side. The *New York Times* reported in late November that the Sunni insurgency in Iraq had enough funds to sustain itself.[202] The majority of the funding came from oil smuggling, kidnappings, counterfeiting, and corrupt charities. A classified U.S. government report obtained by the *Times* said the insurgency raised between $70 million and $200 million a year from illegal activities, up to half of which came from oil smuggling and "corrupt and complicit" oil officials. Another $36 million a year came from ransoms paid for kidnapped victims, including sums paid by foreign governments. The report said, "Sources of terrorist and insurgent finance within Iraq—independent and foreign

sources—are currently sufficient to sustain the groups' existence and operation . . . If recent revenue and expense estimates are correct, terrorist and insurgent groups in Iraq may have enough surplus funds with which to support other terrorist organizations outside of Iraq."

The report indicated that the insurgency was no longer reliant on funds secured by former Ba'athists during the U.S.–led invasion. Islamic charities, however, may be contributing to the insurgency as well. According to intelligence cited in the report, only 10 to 15 of the 4,000 nongovernmental groups supported insurgents. The report did acknowledge that investigators met several obstructions in trying to find the insurgency's money trail. Yet the ability of the Iraqi insurgency to sustain itself meant that attacks in Iraq would not decrease in the near future for the lack of funds.[203]

The Role of Sunni Militias

Sunnis increasingly responded by creating militias to counter Shi'ite reprisal attacks. For example, Sunnis formed neighborhood militias to protect themselves from Shi'ite reprisal attacks following the large-scale bombing in Sadr City on November 23, 2006. Clerics from the Ghazaliya, Amiriyah, and Adhamiya neighborhoods made joint announcements to Sunnis: "Open fire toward any gunmen who enters the city, such as the Mahdi Army, except the Americans, because they come to protect the people from the death squads and guard the neighborhood."[204] Sunnis were clearly preparing for reprisal attacks similar to those that occurred following the bombing of the Shi'ite Samarra mosque in February.

A Sunni man in a western Baghdad neighborhood said, for example, that his neighborhood watch had formed in September and had fought the Mahdi Army the day after the Sadr City bombings. He said that his 100-man force included former Ba'athists and intelligence officials and guarded about 500 Sunni homes. However, he added, "The mujaheedin are helping us. Today two cars with gunmen came from Abu Ghraib to help us defend our mosques and our area from militia attacks."[205] More closely organized and coordinated Sunni death squads would clearly mean more volatile and larger-scale encounters with Shi'ite militias and growing civil conflict.

The majority of Sunni militias were disorganized and unlikely to present as cohesive a threat as the Shi'ite Mahdi Army. The increasing reliance on "nationalists" and Islamists, however, allowed these more organized insurgents to gain a foothold in Sunni Baghdad. And perhaps more importantly, the expansion of Sunni militias underscored Sunni distrust of Iraqi security forces.

THE KURDISH DIMENSION

The Kurdish dimension of the war continued to be another key element in the rise of civil conflict. The key issues for the Kurds were separating the country into autonomous regions, control over oil resources, the issue of Kirkuk, and

relations with Turkey. The Kurds continued to remind Iraq's national government that they were cooperating and participating in the reconciliation dialogue only on a voluntary basis.

The Kurds won what seemed to be a political victory in October 2006 with the passing of the national segregation bill in parliament that allowed governorates to join together and form autonomous regions in 2008. It provided a degree of greater autonomy that could give the Kurds far more control over oil in the northern region, which was expected to have untapped reserves. Greater Kurdish autonomy, however, was monitored closely by neighboring Turkey. Turkey reiterated the need to curtain the rebel activities of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and pledged protection to the minority Turkoman population in Iraq, especially Kirkuk.

As the sectarian violence spread from Baghdad to surrounding regions, the Kurdish position on unity became less clear. Some Kurdish politicians said they expected Kurdistan to separate itself from the rest of Iraq if the fighting reached far enough north, but the issues of resources and Kirkuk could force the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to become military involved.

The Kurdish region continued to rely principally on the Peshmerga—much of which was incorporated in the Iraqi security forces—for security. The August–November DoD "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report to Congress said the following of the Peshmerga:

> The Peshmerga is a security organization that operates as a regional guard force described in Article 121 of the Iraqi Constitution. It maintains security independently within and along Iraq's borders for the Kurdistan Regional Government. Private security companies have hired individual Peshmerga members for work outside the Kurdish area. Some members of the Peshmerga have been integrated into the Iraqi Army; there are allegations that these former Peshmerga members remain loyal to Kurdish authorities rather than to their proper Iraqi chain of command. Although the Peshmerga does not attack Coalition or Iraqi forces, and in some cases provides security for reconstruction efforts, the perceived dual allegiance of the Peshmerga undermines effective national security and governance.[206]

The *New York Times* reported on December 26, 2006, that hundreds of prisoners, some innocent, were being held in Kurdish prisons in poor conditions and without legal rights. The Minister and Director of Office of Foreign Relations, Falah Mustafa Bakir, of the Kurdistan Regional Government wrote a letter to the *Times* strongly disavowing the article. He said that anyone held in Kurdistan prisons "have known affiliations with Al Qaeda, Ansar al-Islam and other groups committed to killing Americans, Kurds and Iraqis. The rule of law is what guides our treatment of prisoners, whatever their crimes."[207]

However, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq November–December Human Rights Report said,

> Human rights violations are reportedly committed by security forces at detention centers. In many cases the arrest and detention of people is carried out by Kurdish militias.

> Detainees are often transferred directly to the Kurdistan Region without notifying the governorate or the police. Officials in Kirkuk are aware of such practices, yet no significant effort has been made to stop them.[208]

The Issue of Kirkuk

Kirkuk, as in other cities, had become part of a broader sectarian and ethnic struggle for control of political and economic space that now affected all of Iraq's minorities. The number of groups involved, including Turkey, and the upcoming census in July 2007 and the referendum in November 2007 made Kirkuk a particularly important space to control. In the latter half of 2007 the number of attacks by each militia would be irrelevant, but what would be important was how much political and economic support they could acquire; tactical victories meant little when it came time for the referendum on inclusion into the Kurdish area of "Kurdistan."

The three-step plan for Kirkuk outlined in the Iraqi constitution had set up an impossible timeline for addressing the issue: by March 29, 2007, Kurdish towns and camps that had been administratively excluded from Kirkuk during Saddam Hussein's reign would be reincluded; by July 15, 2007, a census of the area would be complete; and by the end of 2007, residents of Kirkuk would hold a referendum to decide if they would join the region of Kurdistan.

Kurdish leaders, however, increasingly indicated that the decision on Kirkuk would not necessarily be reached through the process established by the constitution. Sadi Ahmed Pire, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), said, "Kirkuk can be solved two ways: We can discuss it with the neighboring countries and Iraqi communities and solve the situation politically or we can solve it militarily. We hope to solve it peacefully, but this is an issue that cannot wait. It will be resolved."

Kurdish politicians said that the civil conflict between Sunnis and Shi'ites spread as far north as Kirkuk, and they expected the KRG would "separate" Kurdistan from the rest of Iraq. It was clear that the Kurds included Kirkuk with the rest of Kurdistan —for historical and economic reasons.[209] The KRG's position on the civil conflict between Sunnis and Shi'ites, however, was still unclear. Kurdistan repeatedly reminded the Iraqi government that its national participation was voluntary, yet if the question of Kirkuk came to military blows, the Kurds could find themselves tacitly involved and supporting one side in the sectarian war.

Popular pressure from the Kurds was also a problem. Kurdish refugees were living in a soccer stadium outside Kirkuk waiting for land to become available or reclaim housing given back in the "normalization process." Kurdish officials said that 50,000 Arab families had expressed a willingness to leave Kirkuk and that the referendum could still happen in 2007.

At the same time, the Kurdish authorities in Kirkuk said that normalization was proceeding too slowly. There were 40,000 housing applications filed under the constitutional act and most were appealed. Baghdad was simply too bogged down with the applications. Kurds stated that the ministry dealing with normalization included former Ba'athists who would protect the rights of Sunnis in Kirkuk and not force

them relocate. It seemed unlikely that normalization would be completed before a census scheduled for mid-2007, further complicating the matter.

U.S. commanders in the north watched Kirkuk closely because they feared an outbreak of violence if American or Iraqi leaders stalled the referendum. They were also concerned that members of the Mahdi Army had arrived to protect minority Shi'ite residents. U.S. officials also conceded that Arab communities had fewer basic services than Kurdish ones—most likely a result of the Kurdish-dominated provincial government.[210]

The Oil Issue

These problems in the "Kurdish issue" were closely tied to the "oil issue." In September 2006, the prime minister of Iraq's Kurdish region condemned "any attempt by the central government to sabotage Kurdish moves to develop oil resources."[211] In the Kurdish parliament, Premier Nechirvan Barzani said he would oppose any attempt by the central government to hinder the development of the Kurds' oil industry. He then threatened Kurdish succession if the government did not back down.

The proclamation came after Iraq's national Oil Minister, Hussein Shahristani, said that his office would review oil deals signed by Kurdish authorities. Barzani stated that the Iraqi constitution gave the KRG authority over oil and gas since they were not "exclusive powers of the federal government." Several exploratory projects showed potential oil reserves in the south of the Kurdish region and near the city of Kirkuk, and the mountainous region in the far north was widely believed to house untapped reserves.[212]

Although they may have had large untapped oil reserves, Kurds were forced to illegally import oil from Iran. The legal gas stations in Kurdistan did little business as most Kurds received their fuel from side-of-the-road illegal operations. The control of resources by the various groups involved in sectarian fighting became increasingly important as control of political and economic space was crucial to achieving success in the war after the war.

The "Turkish Issue"

Tensions continued to escalate between both the United States and Turkey and Turkey and the Kurds. In late August, Turkey began deploying forces along its border with Iraq in response to the failure of diplomatic efforts to deter the PKK from using bases within Iraq to launch attacks at Turkish forces. While Turkey's buildup of forces was widely perceived to be a show of force, a political analyst in Istanbul, Cengiz Çandar, added that it was also "a statement to the Americans that Turkey is uneasy and trying to follow up on its demands that the PKK be dismantled."[213]

In September 2006, Turkish authorities visited Kirkuk in northern Iraq to express support for the Turkoman minority. The Turkoman population had been complaining of increased sectarian prejudice from the Kurdish majority. The Turkish

delegation warned the provincial council that it was Turkey's right to protect the minority in Kirkuk. The delegation said that Turkey would not interfere militarily, but added, "Turkey is keen to preserve the territorial integrity of Iraq, but it is our right as a neighboring state to have a presence in Iraq just as the Americans have a presence."[214]

The Kurdish rebel group, the PKK, also remained a seed of contention between Iraq and Turkey. U.S. officials estimated that roughly 5,000 Turkish Kurd militants were based in Iraq at the time. Prime Minister Erdoğan of Turkey sent a letter to Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki reiterating his concern with PKK activity in mid-September. He requested that Iraq take steps to halt cross-border attacks, shut down PKK-affiliated parties in Iraq, and label the PKK a terrorist organization, a step that had already been taken by the United States and the European Union.[215] In response to these concerns and in an effort to maintain a good relationship with its neighbor, the Iraqi government announced on September 19 that it would shut down all PKK offices around the country.[216] Iraq also appointed a special coordinator for countering the PKK.[217]

In early October, however, the PKK declared a unilateral cease-fire. Erdoğan urged the United States to take advantage of the situation and crack down on rebel activity. Erdoğan dismissed the cease-fire and said that rebels usually laid down their weapons during the winter months. On the contrary, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, told the Turkish government that the PKK had no future: "I believe we have just entered a period of normalization in our relations with Turkey. The thorn that prevented trust between us was the PKK. But now the PKK is finished. It has no future."[218]

Despite the PKK unilateral cease-fire, Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül criticized Iraqi Kurdish leaders for not doing enough against the PKK. He said that if the Kurds continued to allow the group to operate, "We will do whatever is necessary to fight this organization. I want to give the message that if our friends don't help us, we will do the job ourselves." He was also concerned because "the PKK has a new source of weapons. They have obtained weapons and explosives from the Iraqi Army. They bring them into Turkey and use them with remote control devices." There were no other reports of PKK rebels using equipment from the Iraqi Army. But the Kurds were in charge of security in the northern region and were largely left to their own devices.[219]

The United States responded to Turkey's appeals at the end of October. Department of State Coordinator for Iraq, David M. Satterfield, said, "No, we are not satisfied with progress on the PKK. There are more steps that need to be taken to ensure that the PKK does not return to violence . . . Too many Turks have suffered from PKK violence." He said that the Iraqi government had to take more steps against the PKK, such as closing down PKK offices. He added that the cease-fire was not sufficient; the PKK had to lay down its arms for good.[220]

According to a Turkish poll, PKK terrorism ranked at the top among the public's concerns. The lack of action by both the PUK and the KDP in Iraqi Kurdistan against the PKK was interpreted by Turkey as implicit sanctioning of rebel activity.

Similarly, the lack of U.S. action against the PKK and calling Kurdistan the most stable region in Iraq offered little incentive for Turkey to help stabilize the warring Shi'ite and Sunni factions.[221]

In early January 2007 Prime Minister Erdoğan of Turkey again accused the United States and Iraq of failing to curb rebel PKK activity in northern Iraq. Erdoğan said the mission led by U.S. envoy Joseph W. Ralston, appointed in August to coordinate efforts against the PKK, made little if any progress. "We were to make joint efforts against the terrorist organization with the United States and Iraq. This has not materialized," he said. He added, "Is this a tactic to distract us? We want concrete results."[222] Erdoğan also reiterated that Turkey was ready and willing to help Iraq get back on its feet. He called stability in Iraq a more important foreign policy issue for Turkey at the beginning of 2007 than accession into the European Union. He said that Turkey was assessing what contributions could be made to help end the civil war status quo in Iraq.[223]

U.S./IRAQI FORCE RESPONSE TO THE CIVIL WAR: STILL BATTLING FOR BAGHDAD

It was clear that by the end of the summer Operation Together Forward I and Operation Together Forward II had largely failed to produce meaningful results. Sectarian killings continued on a daily basis in many parts of the capital, and the death toll was marginally lower than the all-time high the city witnessed in July.

Gen. Peter Chiarelli, MNC-I Commander in 2006, said that Operation Together Forward II (OTF II) had not produced the outcome for which MNF-I had hoped. He did say that the communities in which Coalition troops were able to "clear and hold" were experiencing an improvement in daily life.[224] In the neighborhood of Masafi, for example, the murder rate plummeted from 6.8 on average a day to 1.1, according to U.S. military sources.[225]

The Pentagon's August–November "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report described Operation Forward Together II as follows:

> OTF II was launched as a means for reducing violence in Baghdad. OTF II began on August 7, 2006, and quickly led to a significant reduction in death squad activity, as extremists concentrated on hiding their weapons and evading capture during intensive search operations. However, as the operation progressed, death squads adapted to the new security environment and resumed their activities in areas not initially targeted by OTF II. During September, the levels of violence and civilians casualties increased and in some cases almost returned to levels seen in July. Shi'a death squads leveraged support from some elements of the Iraqi Police Service and the National Police who facilitated freedom of movement and provided advance warning of upcoming operations. This is a major reason for the increased levels of murders and executions.[226]

Suicide bombings reached a new peak in the early fall, although sectarian murders and executions were still the number one killers of Iraqi civilians.[227] U.S. and Iraqi

forces continued to find dozens of bodies dumped around Baghdad every day, most showing signs of torture attributed to sectarian death squads. U.S. and Iraqi officials reported that the clear and hold strategy was effective in areas in which it had been implemented, but U.S. military intelligence warned at the end of September that militias were reinfiltrating previously cleared neighborhoods.

By the end of September Operation Forward Together II supposedly had completed its mission in seven neighborhoods: Shaab, Adhamiya, Ghazaliya, Ameriyah, East Mansour, Risalah, and Dora. But the "clear, hold, and build" strategy at best had cleared without holding or building and had yet to begin in several of the most dangerous neighborhoods, and violence did not cease in Ghazaliya—despite U.S. and Iraqi force presence.[228] At the beginning of October, 15,400 U.S. troops were still involved in Operation Together Forward II along with about 45,000 Iraqi Army troops and police.[229] Attacks in Baghdad had now increased 43 percent since the middle of the summer.

In a November 15 address to the Senate Armed Services Committee, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency said, "Recent Coalition and ISF operations in Baghdad have achieved limited success." He added that part of the security problem stemmed from al-Maliki's "reluctance to conduct operations in Shia militia strongholds."[230] At the same committee hearing, General Abizaid, Commander of CENTCOM, said that 80 percent of the sectarian killings in Iraq happened within a 35-mile radius of Baghdad.[231]

Tensions between the United States and the Maliki Government and Plans for a New Strategy

The failure of Operation Together Forward II and the intensifying civil war pushed the United States and the Iraqi government to seek a new strategy for Baghdad. This played a major role in shaping the new "surge" strategy that President Bush announced in early 2007. There was, however, disagreement on how and what the strategy should accomplish.

Prime Minister al-Maliki indicated his government would accept a temporary surge of U.S. forces in the capital. Al-Maliki's advisers said that he feared marginalizing al-Sadr from the political process because it would escalate sectarian violence, but if the Mahdi Army did not stop attacks, U.S. and Iraqi forces would take military action. One adviser said, "The prime minister, I can assure you, is not a fan of Moqtada Sadr in any way."[232]

Under al-Maliki's plan, U.S. forces would be concentrated mainly in the outer Sunni neighborhoods of the capital and Iraqi forces would take over security of central Baghdad. The plan was aimed at showing Shi'ites that government forces could protect everyday Iraqis and that militias were no longer needed. Surging U.S. forces to only Sunni neighborhoods, however, would make it appear like the United States was supporting a side in the sectarian conflict.[233]

In any case, the United States pushed forward with a different response amid growing Sunni and Shi'ite tensions. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, who replaced

General Chiarelli as MNC-I Commander in December 2006, said that previous offensives in Baghdad failed to stop sectarian violence due to a shortage of Iraqi troops and a singular focus on Sunni neighborhoods. He said the following about Operation Together Forward:

> We were able to clear areas. We were not able to hold the areas. We were not able to get security forces in there for an extended period of time that protected the people . . . I think what happened was we overestimated the availability of Iraqi security forces initially, we didn't have enough here. So we have to be able to make sure we have enough forces, Iraqi and coalition, in order to do it this time . . . You have to go after both Sunni and Shia neighborhoods. Together Forward was mostly focused on Sunni neighborhoods, and we've got to do both.[234]

DETERIORATION IN DIYALA

The spreading civil conflict had a major impact in ethnically mixed Diyala Province, just north of Baghdad and bordering Iran. Membership in the Mahdi Army reached 6,000 to 8,000 in Diyala, but Shi'a civilians had for the most part been driven out of Baquba, the volatile provincial capital. Baquba was heavily infiltrated by both Sunni nationalist and neo-Salafi insurgents. The insurgents waged intimidation campaigns against the Sunni community and used soft sectarian cleansing to push Shi'ites out of the area.

In mid to late 2006 security in Diyala deteriorated to the point that Sunni insurgents walked the streets in Baquba, bodies were found daily on city streets, insurgents and militias used intimidation campaigns to force the relocation of thousands of people, the Iraqi security forces were infiltrated by militias and not trusted by much of the population, and reconstruction ground to a halt. In the last week of November, for example, police found dozens of bodies on the streets of Baquba, and Iraqi troops found a mass grave with 28 bodies just south of the city.[235]

Diyala was 55 percent Sunni with abundant farmland and untapped oil resources, making it a strategic province for both Sunni and Shi'ite armed groups. Sunni insurgents in Diyala, where a U.S. airstrike killed al-Zarqawi, were composed of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, Ansar al Sunna, and the 1920 Revolutionary Army, according to U.S. officials.

Although the United States maintained a strong presence in Diyala, Iraqi security forces were supposed to carry out most of the missions. The U.S. strategy in 2006 was to train and equip ISF while taking a hands-off approach. ISF in Diyala, however, were overwhelmingly Shi'a and not trusted by the Sunni majority. The provincial commander was handpicked by the Badr Organization. Shi'ite police did not dare enter many Sunni towns, and thus insurgents had a virtual safe haven. In a video in November, insurgents were seen on the streets pulling Shi'ites out of their homes and killing them, leaving little doubt about who held the real control.

It was clear that U.S. forces would need to take the lead. Members of the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division took over security in Diyala in October 2006 and decided on a

major change in strategy. The United States, with Iraqi help, would launch a counterinsurgency campaign to root out both Sunni insurgents and Shi'ite militias. U.S. troops, however, had to convince the Iraqi ground forces commander, General Shakir, to change his strategy. Shakir had been accused of allowing torture of Sunni captives and bullying and abusing Sunni civilians.

Colonel Sutherland, commander of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry, said that after several joint raids, General Shakir agreed to adopt a classic counterinsurgency campaign and refrain from intimidation of Sunni civilians. Sunni tribal chiefs, however, said that they wanted to cooperate with U.S. forces, but would not until the security situation improved and General Shakir was replaced.

It took time to react to the rise of violence in Diyala. On January 4, 2007, 1,000 U.S. and Iraqi forces launched the first offensive in a new counterinsurgency campaign in Diyala. U.S. military officials said the strike targeted a series of farms and irrigation canals suspected of housing weapons caches, safe houses, and training ranges. However, smoke signals and flares from the target area, as well as deep trenches and interdiction of canal bridges, indicated that insurgents were prepared for the attack.

U.S. commanders from the 3rd Brigade said that details of the offensive were kept secret from the 400 Iraqi soldiers of the 5th Army Division.[236] The launch of the joint operation was chaotic as Iraqi Army vehicles started off in the wrong direction and blocked the road. By the time the forces reached the insurgent stronghold, no possible insurgents remained.

Lt. Col. Andrew Poppas for the 3rd Brigade said of insurgents in Diyala, "We will never kill or capture them all, and even if we do, there are plenty more who will take their place," acknowledging the "undrainable swamp." He added, "Our success, in my view, will be based on continued presence, denying this place as a safehaven."[237]

On January 7, U.S. airpower and joint U.S.–Iraqi ground forces attacked the series of irrigation canals in Hamoud—near Balad Ruz, where U.S. and Iraqi forces expected hundreds of insurgents to be hiding. The previous day, troops burned the high reeds in the area, giving them a better view for the air assault. The U.S. military said 21 armed insurgents were killed in the assault.

However, a series of antitank mines and extreme mud slowed the ground assault and killed two Iraqi soldiers and wounded 27. When forces reached the town of Hamoud, they again found only woman and children. The overall operation took five days and wore heavily on Iraqi and U.S. troops, but U.S. commanders believed they had trapped many of the insurgents in underground caves and bunkers.[238]

Once again, however, tactical victories did not translate into long-term success. It was clear within weeks that the number of U.S. and Iraqi forces in Diyala were insufficient to "hold" captured areas. Few basic services were operational, and residents lacked trust in the provincial government and security forces. Diyala Province also made it clear that the United States needed a new strategy not only for Baghdad, but for the entire nation.

COUNTERINSURGENCY IN ANBAR PROVINCE

Anbar remained a major problem in both military and political terms, and some 20,000 U.S. troops were deployed in the province through the end of 2006. The dangerous security situation in Anbar received renewed attention when the Chief of Intelligence for the Marine Corps in Iraq, Col. Pete Devlin, filed an unusual secret report concluding that the prospects for securing the province were dim and that U.S. security efforts in the area were largely ineffective. Devlin's report described a dangerously fragmented environment in Anbar, where the local governments collapsed, and the central government exerted no authority—creating a political vacuum that was being filled by al-Qa'ida in Iraq.[239]

Continued U.S. recruiting efforts in Anbar were also hampered by a lack of ISF capabilities, a lack of Iraqi government pressure and services, a lack of aid activity, and a range of more specialized problems like the Iraqi government's neglect to pay the police forces. U.S. Marine Brig. Gen. Robert Neller, Deputy Commander of U.S. troops in Anbar, said that some police officers, most of whom were Sunnis, had not been paid in months. He added, "That's why people in Anbar think the government in Baghdad doesn't want them to succeed." Officials in the capital said that policemen did not receive their checks because of corruption in Anbar; officials in the western province submitted false names and pocketed the money for themselves, according to an advisor to the prime minister.

U.S. forces were also fighting against an intimidation campaign waged by Sunni insurgents. In the small town of Rawah, there were only seven police officers in November; numbers declined rapidly after insurgents killed a policeman in June and dragged his head through the marketplace. In Qaim along the Iranian border Mayor Farhan said that he desperately needed equipment and money to pay his police force. He said that he received no support from the national government.[240]

Several weeks later, a U.S. commander in Anbar, Col. Sean B. MacFarland of the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, said the goal in the province was to reduce violence to a level at which the Iraqis could defeat the insurgency. The Associated Press reported that he said, "They will always be perceived as more legitimate than an external force like our own."[241] Colonel MacFarland said that putting a timeline of defeating the insurgency in Anbar was difficult. He said the key to victory was perseverance, and that could take any number of years. He did, however, comment that the United States was making strides against al-Qa'ida in Iraq; attacks against U.S. and Iraqi forces dropped from roughly 20 per day to 15, and recruitment of Iraqi security forces "soared 10-fold."[242]

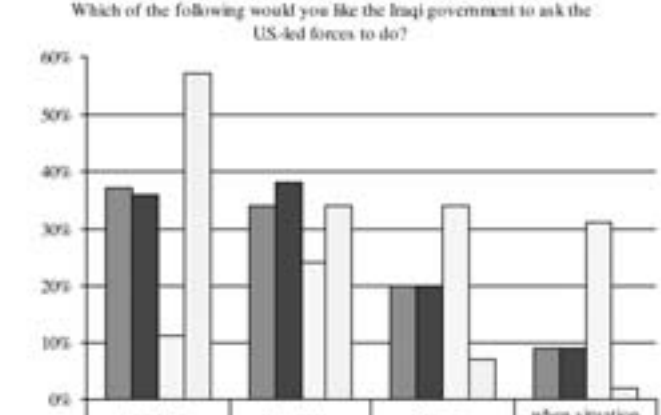
THE BRITISH MILITARY PRESENCE IN BASRAH

The security environment in Basrah continued to deteriorate in the final quarter of 2006. British forces continued to suffer from their inability to capitalize on postinvasion momentum in shaping a secular and nationalist Basra in the summer of 2003. It would not be inaccurate to assert that by the fall of 2006, British forces had effectively lost the south of Iraq—source of over 90 percent of the central government's

revenue and a region that accounted for 70 percent of the country's proven oil reserves—both politically and militarily in 2005. British initiatives to train and operationalize local Iraqi security forces and police failed to produce effective law and order initiatives in the region and served to do little more than cement the hold of Shi'ite Islamist elements by other means. Operation Corrode in May 2006 and Operation Sinbad in October 2006 highlighted British efforts to set up joint British and Iraqi police initiatives, although such programs will be increasingly less effective as British troops are drawn down from the region—a move that could see the emergence of a new round of sectarian violence, so-called "soft" ethnic cleansing, and intra-Shi'ite political infighting. Statements by the Chief of the General Staff, Gen. Sir Richard Dannatt, in October 2006 were strongly critical of the Blair government's position on Iraqi forces in Iraq—an unprecedented move by a top British commissioned officer. In an interview with the *Daily Mail,* General Dannatt went so far as to state that the presence of British troops in Iraq "exacerbates the security problem in Iraq."

IRAQ VIEWS ON THE U.S. PRESENCE

The rising level of violence further weakened support for the Coalition. An increasing number of Iraqis felt that the United States should withdraw quickly, as shown in Figure 10.16. The Shi'a, in particular, felt a greater urgency; the percentile



Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "The Iraqi Public on the US Presence and the Future of Iraq," September 27, 2006, polling conducted September 1–4, sample of 1150 from all 18 governorates.

Figure 10.16 Views on the Withdrawal of U.S. Forces—September 2006

calling for withdrawal in a WorldPublicOpinion.org poll increased from 22 percent to 26 percent in six months. On the contrary, Sunnis moderated their calls for withdrawal; in January 83 percent wished U.S. forces to leave within six months, and in September the percentile dropped to 57 percent. This decrease may have reflected Sunni concerns about the growth of Shi'ite militias.[243] One concerned Sunni resident in the central Baghdad neighborhood of Tobji expressed his concerns: "When the Americans are in my neighborhood I can put my head in my pillow and sleep. If they stay, there will be security. If they leave there will not only be civil war. There will be a house-to-house war."[244]

Overall, only 21 percent of those polled thought that the U.S. military was a stabilizing force and 78 percent thought it provoked conflict. Eighty-two percent of Shi'a, 97 percent of Sunnis, and 41 percent of Kurds shared this latter critical view. The Kurds remained the most confident in U.S. troops of the three sects. Similarly, the majority of Iraqis—58 percent—felt that if U.S. troops withdrew by early 2007, it would *decrease* the amount of interethnic violence.

In addition, a majority—61 percent—of Iraqis approved of attacks on U.S.–led forces in Iraq, up from 47 percent in January. Most significantly, 62 percent of Shi'a approved of attacks, opposed to only 41 percent earlier in the year. Kurds continued to express the greatest disapproval of attacks, while Sunni approval increased marginally from 88 percent to 92 percent. Finally, the vast majority—78 percent—believed that even if the Iraqi government were to tell to the United States to withdraw all forces, the United States would fail to do so.[245]

An unclassified survey by the Department of State found similar views on the U.S. presence. However, the polling sample was small and did not include residents from Anbar Province. The poll found that nine in ten Iraqi Arab youths saw the United States as an occupying force, but 70 percent of Kurdish youths saw the Coalition forces as liberating.[246]

A poll conducted by the Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies in late November found that 95 percent of Iraqis felt that the security situation was better in 2003 than it was in late 2006. About half of those polled favored an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops, 11 percent wanted U.S. troops to withdraw when the Iraqi government made the request, 14 percent believed U.S.–led troops should withdraw when violence ceased, and 20 percent favored a phased withdrawal beginning at the time of the polling. A total of 66 percent believed that the security situation would improve if Coalition forces left Iraq.[247]

These polling results presented a bleak picture driven by a year of the highest Iraqi casualties since the invasion in 2003. Iraqis clearly had less and less confidence in the ability of U.S.–led forces and in U.S. intentions.

ATTACK AND CASUALTY PATTERNS

Sectarian violence and ethnic violence increasingly dominated the conflict in Iraq. The Sunni insurgency continued to provoke Shi'ites toward full-scale civil war, and Shi'ite militias now responded to a greater extent than they had in previous years.

The roots of the civil conflict, however, had begun in 2003 and had been building ever since.

The August–November 2006 "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report by the Department of Defense stated the following:

> Attack levels—both overall and in all specific measurable categories—were the highest on record during this reporting period, due in part to what has become an annual cycle of increased violence during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. . . The most significant development in the Iraqi security environment was the growing role of Shi'a militants. It is likely that Shi'a militants were responsible for more civilian casualties than those associated with terrorist organization. Shi'a militants were the most significant threat to the Coalition presence in Baghdad and southern Iraq.[248]

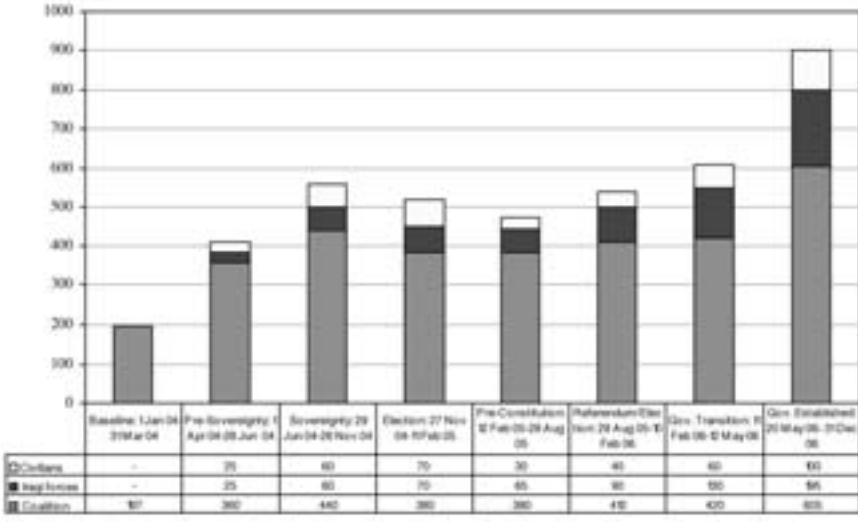
During the first three weeks of Ramadan the number of violent incidents averaged 36 a day. This was an increase from an average of 28 a day from mid-June 2006, when new security sweeps in Baghdad began, until the beginning of Ramadan on September 24, 2006. Before the sweeps began there was an average of 22 attacks a day. U.S. military officials had expected an increase in attacks during Ramadan based on previous years' experience.[249] The overall pattern of attacks in October averaged 180 a week, according to General Maples, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.[250] The Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report for August–November stated that attacks rose 22 percent during that period. The week following the end of Ramadan saw a 41-percent decline in sectarian killings, according to Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell, but this was a cyclical dip, not a change in the overall trend.[251]

Overall, 55 percent of all attacks occurred in Baghdad and Anbar provinces. The report also said that the majority of attacks, 68 percent, were still directed at Coalition forces.[252] As mentioned in previous chapters, however, MNF-I reporting most likely understated the number of attacks against civilians.

U.S. and MNF-I reporting did a far less accurate job of reporting on the various forms of "cleansing" that had become at least as important as major overt acts of violence as given sides attempted to dominate the other or push them out of areas where they had the majority or had superior power.

Both the Coalition and the Iraqi government were slow to recognize that killing and casualties were only part of the story, and the map of sectarian and ethnic violence was far broader than the major incidents of violence reported by the MNF-I and Iraqi officials. Moreover, the data on dead and wounded became progressively less accurate because civilian casualties involved in disappearances, kidnappings, and a rising tide of individual killings, shootings, and tortures could not be counted with any reliability even in the Baghdad area. Even so, the U.S. reporting summarized in the following figures does provide some insight into the rising trends in the most overt forms of violence:

- Average weekly attacks by political benchmarks between January 2004 and November 2006 are shown in Figure 10.17. The trend of total attacks had clearly increased over



Source: Material adapted from "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Quarterly Report to Congress, Department of Defense, March 2007, pp. 19, www.defenselink.mil.

*Note: Data points are estimates from above-mentioned report.

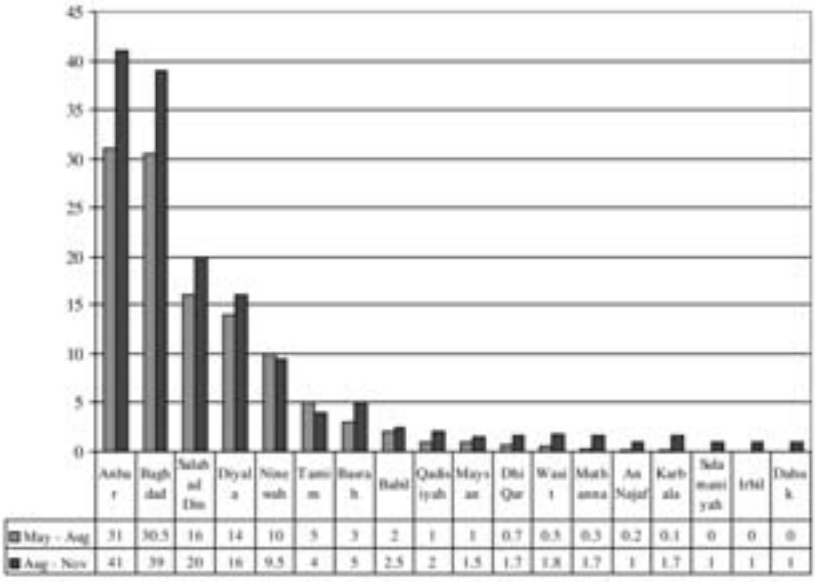
Figure 10.17 Average Weekly Attacks Targeting Civilians, ISF, and the Coalition by Political Benchmarks: January 2004–December 2006

time. The rise in attacks against Coalition forces after May 20, 2006, was a result of Operation Together Forward II and an increased presence of troops on the streets. Figure 10.17 also shows the increase in the number of attacks against civilians after the creation of Prime Minister Malki's government in May 2006 till the end of the year. MNF-I reporting, however, had largely understated the growing number of attacks against civilians since 2004.

- Average attacks by province are shown in Figure 10.18. Anbar and Baghdad provinces now accounted for a similar number of attacks. This figure also shows that the number of attacks rose in almost every province in the fall of 2006.
- Average attacks by major city from 2005–2006 are shown in Figure 10.19. This graph shows that attacks in most major cities outside the capital rose only slightly after the summer of 2006, but attacks in Baghdad—a result of the rising sectarian violence—increased at a much higher rate.
- Figure 10.20 shows the average sectarian acts of violence from January through October 2006. This graph shows the steady increase in sectarian violence since the February 2006 mosque bombing. Sectarian attacks decreased slightly in August, but then rose to their highest point in the year in October.

IED, Vehicle-Borne IED, and Suicide Bombings

IED attacks continued to be the principal cause of death to U.S. troops in Iraq. Insurgents continually developed the rudimentary explosives to operate slightly



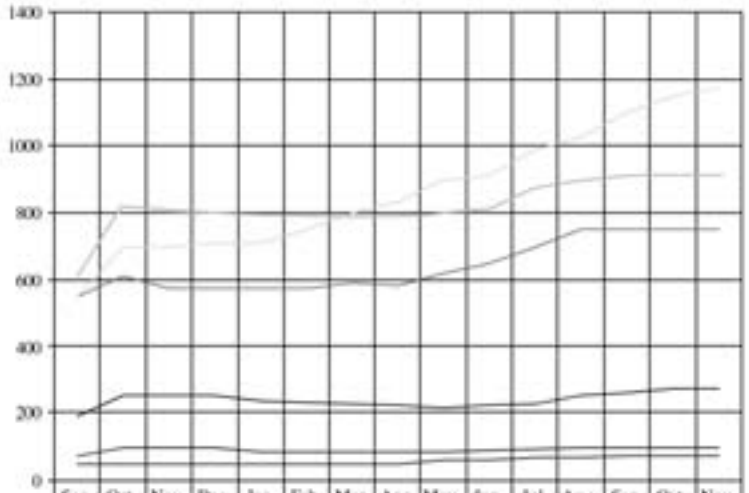
Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p. 32. and "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 21.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.

Figure 10.18 Total Attacks by Province: May–November 2006

above the levels of U.S. jamming technology. A summary of IEDs found and IED attacks in Baghdad is provided in Figure 10.21. Retired Army General Montgomery Meigs, Head of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization, said the large numbers of unclaimed explosives in Iraq made it very easy for insurgents to build IEDs. According to British military intelligence, "There are enough stocks of illegal explosives to continue the same level of attack for 274 years without resupply." The deadliest IEDs in 2006 were "clusters of artillery shells or other high explosives buried in roadways," said Meigs.[253] In the first week of October 2006, the U.S. military announced that IED roadside bombings in Baghdad had reached an all-time high. The majority of the bombs were attributed to sectarian militias in the capital. U.S. military spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell said that the number of casualties—although high—was not proportional to the large increase in the number of attacks.[254]

U.S. forces died from roadside bombs in the fall and early winter of 2006 at a higher rate than at any other time in the war. In December, 60 percent of the 53 casualties by December 16 were from roadside bombs. Throughout the war, roadside bombs caused half of U.S. casualties. Pentagon and U.S. military officials expressed anger at the end of 2006 that the millions spent on research of IEDs led to no new intelligence on how bombers operated. Several congressmen called the Joint IED Defeat Organization a failure at the end of 2006. The organization spent 63 percent



	Sep. 05	Oct. 05	Nov. 05	Dec. 05	Jan. 06	Feb. 06	Mar. 06	Apr. 06	May. 06	Jun. 06	Jul. 06	Aug. 06	Sep. 06	Oct. 06	Nov. 06
Mosul	190	250	250	250	235	230	225	220	215	220	225	250	260	270	270
Tikrit	550	610	575	575	575	575	590	585	620	650	700	750	750	750	750
Falluja	610	820	805	800	795	790	790	790	800	810	875	900	910	910	910
Baghdad	550	700	700	710	710	750	800	835	900	910	990	1025	1100	1150	1175
Basra	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	60	60	70	70	75	75	75
Diwan	75	100	100	100	85	85	85	85	85	90	95	100	100	100	100

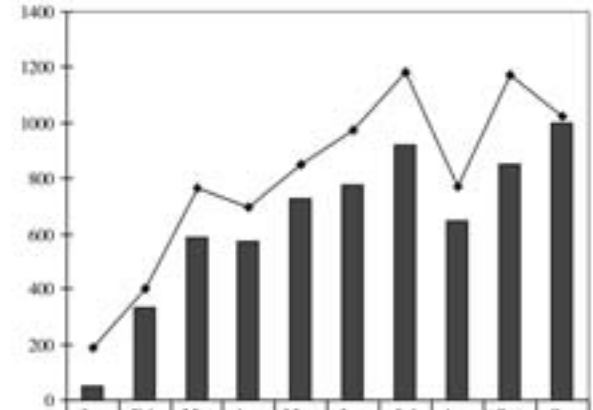
Source: Material adapted from information provided Hans Fah, a security and intelligence consultant working in support of private sector reconstruction programs in Iraq. Data have been drawn from both open source and on the ground protective security networks. Personal correspondence of the author, December 13, 2006. Used with permission. Not official U.S. government data.

Figure 10.19 Average Significant Attacks in Major Iraqi Cities September 2005–November 2006

of its budget on ways to "defeat the device," and 30 percent on attacking the "network" that plants the bombs.[255]

To address these dangers, the U.S. military implemented the following measures:[256]

- Increased the protection of military vehicles by giving 30,000 Humvees new armored doors. The military also said that it spent $1.4 billion in 2006 on jammers that disrupt the electronic signals used to detonate the bombs, $613 million on "neutralizing" (exploding) IEDs, and $470 million on surveillance technology. The Department of Defense also sent Humvees to Iraq with V-shaped hulls to disperse the blast from the IEDs.
- Adopted new training techniques in response to insurgent attacks in October 2006.
- Attacked insurgents based on tips from the Iraqi public. The military said tips peaked in April 2006 with 5,900 being reported.



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Ethno-Sectarian Incidents	50	330	590	575	725	775	920	650	850	1000
Deaths by Execution	190	400	765	700	850	975	1180	770	1170	1025

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 24.

Note: Ethno-sectarian incidents and execution recorded in MNC-I Significant Activities Database. Ethno-sectarian incidents are threats and violence with apparent sectarian motivations. Multiple casualties can result for a single incident. Ethno-sectarian executions are murders with distinct characteristics, and are a subset of total civilian casualties.

Figure 10.20 Ethno-Sectarian Incidents and Executions, January–October 2006

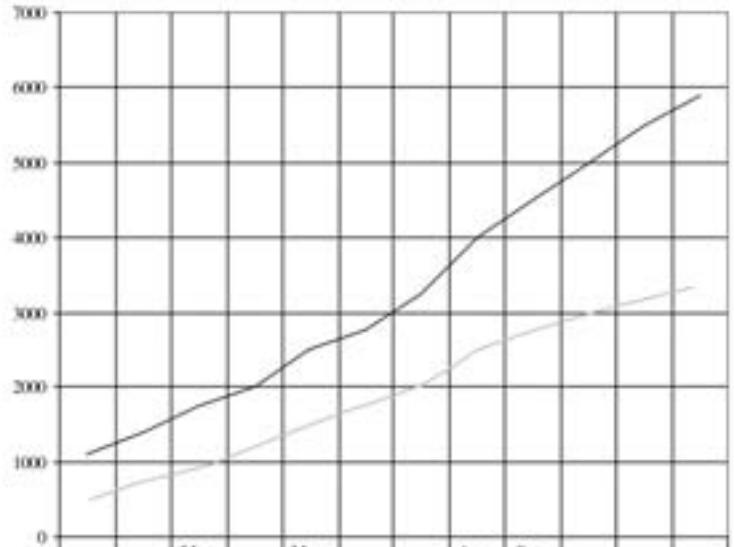
Infrastructure Attacks

The August–November Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report stated that infrastructure attacks decreased to an average of one per week on "infrastructure providing essential services." The report added, however, "the present rate of infrastructure attacks, coupled with a security environment that has hampered repairs, weak ministerial oversight, and ineffectual rapid-repair teams, has proved a major impediment to improving the supply of essential services."[257]

A mid-September 2006 GAO report stated that attacks continued on infrastructure targets, particularly oil pipelines and electrical transmission lines; oil revenue remained below the Oil Ministry's goal for this reason. Electrical reconstruction projects were hindered by poor security conditions as well, and contractors acknowledged having to reduce the scope of or cancel several projects.[258] Insurgents destroyed numerous electricity towers leading into Baghdad in late 2006, leaving the capital with little outside sources of electricity; most people relied on generators. A summary of infrastructure attacks through the war is provided below in Figure 10.22.

U.S. and Iraqi Casualties

U.S. forces experienced a steady increase in casualties over the summer of 2006 because of more intense attacks in the west and Operation Together Forward in



	Jan. 1	Feb. 2	Mar. 12	Apr. 9	May. 7	Jun. 4	Jul. 2	Aug. 13	Sep. 10	Oct. 8	Nov. 5	Dec. 2
IED attacks	1100	1400	1750	2000	2500	2750	3250	4000	4500	5000	5500	5900
IED found	500	750	900	1200	1500	1750	2000	2500	2750	3000	3200	3350

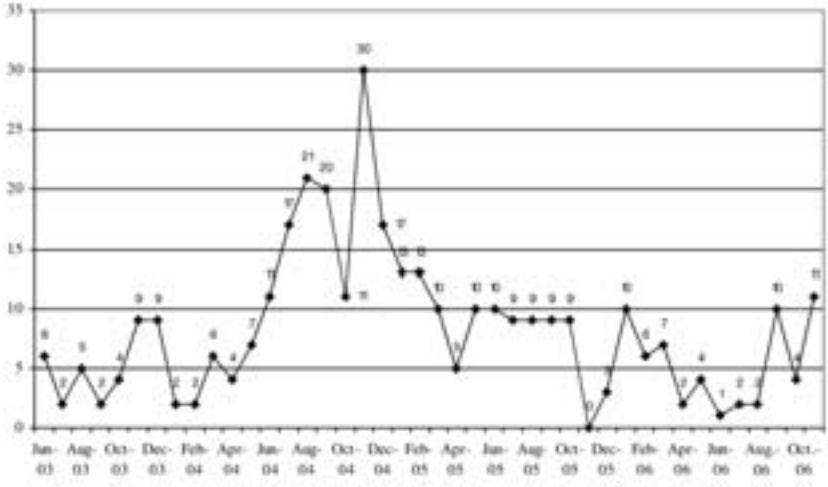
Source: Material adapted from information provided Hans Fah, a security and intelligence consultant working in support of private sector reconstruction programs in Iraq. Data have been drawn from both open source and on the ground protective security networks. Personal correspondence of the author, December 13, 2006. Used with permission. Not official U.S. government data.

Figure 10.21 Cumulative Summary of IED Attacks and IEDs Found in Baghdad, 2006

Baghdad. A total of 74 U.S. soldiers died during September. The first weekend of October proved particularly deadly—17 U.S. soldiers were killed in four days. Another 5 U.S. soldiers died on October 14, and 10 were killed on October 17. October was the deadliest month in 2006 with a total of 105 killed. At least one-third of the attacks in October occurred in Baghdad, according to the U.S. military.[259] Of the 105 killed, 58 were killed by mines and makeshift bombs, 8 were killed by snipers, and 30 died from low-intensity fighting. An additional 6 soldiers died in nonhostile incidents. Furthermore, almost one-third of those killed were on extended or multiple tours.[260] An additional 70 U.S. soldiers died in November—38 by IEDs.

In the last few days of 2006, the number of U.S. military fatalities reached the 3,000 mark, with 112 killed in December, according to the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count; the Associated Press counted 113 killed in December.[261] Furthermore, December was said to be the deadliest month of the war for U.S. troops from IEDs.[262]

In addition, according to Department of Labor statistics, 750 contractors were killed and 8,000 were injured in Iraq by 2006. That figure includes U.S. citizens as



Source: Adapted from material provided by "Iraqi Pipeline Watch," Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, http://www.iags.org/iraqpipelinewatch.htm; and Brookings Iraq Index, www.brookings.edu/iraqindex.

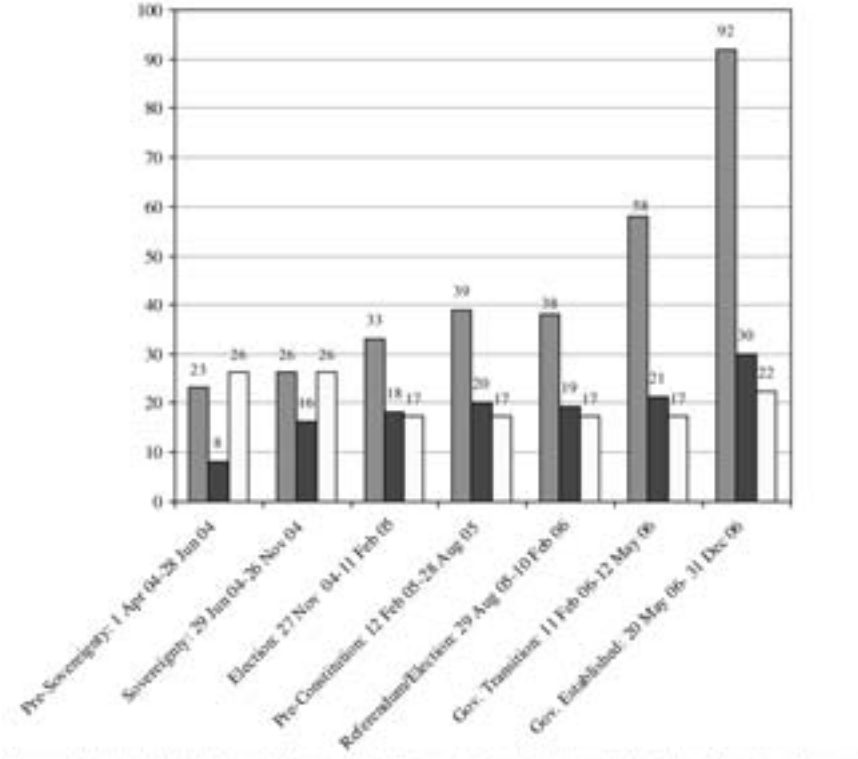
Figure 10.22 Attacks on Iraqi Oil and Gas Pipelines, Installations, and Personnel: June 2003–November 2006

well as Iraqis and others employed under U.S. government contracts.[263] According to the New York–based Committee to Protect Journalists, 26 journalists were killed in Iraq in 2006—the highest number in any year of the war. Of the 91 killed, 64 were Iraqi. There were also 7 journalists kidnapped in 2006 and 43 since the war began.[264]

Similarly, the fall of 2006 saw a rise in the number of wounded. In September 2006, there were 791 U.S. troops wounded, in October there were 780 wounded, in November there were 548 wounded, and in December there were 699 wounded. The number of U.S. casualties did not, therefore, reflect a decrease in the number of troops saved by medical care within 24 hours, but rather a rise in the overall number of attacks against U.S. troops in Iraq.[265]

The rise in attacks occurred despite the fact that the U.S. military was gradually handing over security powers to Iraqi forces. U.S. soldiers continued to die in attacks in the insurgent stronghold in Anbar Province. But the driving force behind the increase in casualties was the growth of sectarian militias in Baghdad over the summer of 2006 and increased U.S. presence on the streets. In 2006, 40 percent of U.S. casualties occurred in Anbar.[266] Figure 10.23 shows Coalition and Iraqi casualties through November 2006, according to the August–November Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress.

Iraqi security force deaths decreased in September to 150—the lowest number since June.[267] The decline may have been due to both Operation Together Forward and moving U.S. and Iraqi forces to Baghdad at the cost of the coverage of other areas, which led insurgents to target U.S. troops instead of Iraqis. Since the



Source: Material adapted from "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Quarterly Report to Congress, Department of Defense, March 2007, p. 19, www.defenselink.mil.

*Note: Data points are estimates from above-mentioned report.

Figure 10.23 Trends in Daily Casualties: April 2004–December 2006

formation of the ISF in 2004, the U.S. military reported on October 6, 2006, that about 4,000 policemen had been killed and 8,000 wounded.[268] ISF deaths rose significantly during the month of Ramadan, according the U.S. military officials. General George W. Casey, Jr., announced that the Iraqi Army alone lost 300 men during the Muslim holy month.[269]

The Iraqi Ministry of Interior announced on December 25 that 12,000 Iraqi policemen_equating to 9 per day—had been killed since the U.S.–led invasion.[270] On January 1, 2007, the MOI also announced that 16,273 Iraqi civilians, soldiers, and policemen died violent deaths in 2006. The number of civilians killed was by far the largest at 14,298.[271]

The patterns in civilian casualties were different. The Iraqi Health Ministry reported that 2,667 Iraqi civilians were killed violently in September—an increase of 400 from the August statistics. The figure was comprised of the numbers given by the Baghdad morgue and numbers reported from hospitals. In September, the morgue reported 1,471 bodies of people who died from violence and hospitals

reported 1,196 victims.[272] Morgue officials said that at least 90 percent of the killings were carried out in execution-style—with shots to the head and body after the victim had been tortured.[273]

In mid-October U.S. military officials announced that in recent weeks there had been significant spikes in violence. The military said that the numbers of killings and bombing had been initially reduced in August. But in October, "The levels of violence over the last few weeks are as high as they have ever been," said General Casey.[274] U.S. military statistics showed that death squads killed 1,450 people in September, up from 450 in February. And in the first ten days of October, death squads had already killed 770 Iraqis—an average of 77 a day. In previous months, the highest average was 47 daily deaths due to sectarian killings, according to U.S. military data. The averages did not even include deaths due to car bombing or suicide bombing attacks, only assassinations and reprisal killings.[275]

The Defense Intelligence Agency said that daily attacks on Iraqi civilians rose from 10 in January 2006 to about 40 in October.[276] According to the Associated Press count, 1,923 Iraqi civilians were killed in November. MNF-I spokesman Major General Caldwell said that attacks decreased against Iraqi civilian and security forces after the end of Ramadan to the lowest levels since May 2006. Security force casualties decreased 21 percent in the four weeks following the holy month, and in Baghdad casualties related to sectarian violence and executions fell 22 percent.[277] The August–November Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report noted that civilian casualties increased 2 percent during the reporting period.[278] Another comparison shows the growth of "body dumps" in the capital during the early fall. During the week that ended on October 14, 176 Iraqis were found on the streets of Baghdad, and the following week 143 were recovered. When Operation Together Forward II commenced the first week of August, 52 bodies were found.[279] And according to a count kept by the Associated Press (AP), 1,170 Iraqi civilians died in October—the highest number since the AP began keeping track.[280]

Statistics issued by the Interior Ministry for Iraqis killed in "political violence" put civilian deaths in October at 1,289, nearly 42 a day and up 18 percent from the 1,089 seen in September.[281] The MOI explained that the number was composed of deaths resulting from "political, sectarian, or ethnic killings, as opposed to criminal murder." MOI also said 139 Iraqi soldiers and police were killed in October–which is far fewer than the 300 announced by U.S. General Casey.[282] Around 1,600 bodies were taken to Baghdad's morgue in October, an official said—10 percent more than in September.[283]

The September 1–October 31, 2006, UNAMI report published the following numbers from the Iraqi Ministry of Health:[284]

- 3,345 civilians were killed violently across Iraq in September and the number of wounded was 3,481.
- 3,709 civilians were killed violently across Iraq in October and the number of wounded was 3,944.

- In Baghdad the total number of civilians killed violently was 2,262 in September and 2,722 in October.
- The number of unidentified bodies in Baghdad was 1,471 in September and 1,782 in October.

Data from Interior Ministry officials showed a 44-percent increase in civilian casualties in November compared with October to 1,850 deaths.[285] December was the deadliest month for Iraqi civilians in 2006, according to statistics released by the Iraqi Health, Interior, and Defense Ministries. The death toll was 1,927 in December, compared with 1,846 in November and 1,315 in October. A total of 12,320 civilians died during 2006, according to the health minister—about 2,000 less than the MOI reported. This statistic, however, did not include kidnap victims whose fate remained unknown and those wounded who later died.[286]

The Health Ministry also said that half of the civilians were killed in the last four months of 2006, which clearly corresponded with the increased level of violence.[287] A *Washington Post* article cited the Health Ministry as saying that 17,000 Iraqi civilians police officers died violently in the latter half of 2006—a significantly larger number than other data released. A Health Ministry official told the *Post* that the number of Iraqis killed in the first six months, 5,640, tripled in the second half of the year. The total number of civilians and security forces killed would be 22,950.[288]

The *Post* acknowledged the discrepancies in the 2006 data and said that the numbers could not be reconciled. Again, what is important is not the actual numbers, but that all sources show that violence increased in the second half of 2006 and that Iraqi civilians were increasingly the victims of sectarian violence.

According to data from the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the Medico Legal Institute of Baghdad, the UN reported that 3,462 civilians died violently in November and 2,914 in December. The number of wounded civilians was 3,755 in November and 3,120 in December. In Baghdad alone the number killed violently was 2,230 in November and 2,501 in December. The UN reported that the total number killed violently in 2006 was 34,452, which the Iraqi government rapidly disavowed. The yearly average was 94 civilians killed every day. Further, 36,685 civilians were wounded in 2006.[289]

Independent counts generally found higher numbers of civilian deaths. The Associated Press counted 13,738 violent deaths of Iraqi civilians, soldiers, and policemen in all of 2006. This number is roughly 2,500 below the count reported by the Iraqi Ministry of Interior.[290] The independent Iraq Coalition Casualties (ICC) reported 3,539 Iraqi civilian deaths in September 2006, 1,315 in October, 1,740 in November, and 1,629 in December.[291] The ICC also reported 150 security force casualties in September, 244 in October, 123 in November, and 123 in December. This figure is higher than the 2,667 deaths reported by the Iraqi Health Ministry, but both numbers are well above average.[292] By January 2007, Iraq Body Count estimated that between 54,432 and 60,098 Iraqi civilians had been killed since the U.S.–led invasion in 2003.[293]

Some outside estimates, however, exaggerated the level of casualties and suffering. A new report on Iraqi casualties using questionable methodology published in the *Lancet* cited a much higher number of civilian casualties. No source of casualty data has great credibility; even official data from updated reports have remained questionable and are widely perceived to be undercounts. Yet, NGO counts may be just as bad in overcounting what governments undercount and in failing to measure the true nature of the human tragedies involved. The report stated that 654,965 additional Iraqis had died since the U.S.–led invasion in 2003.[294]

The research—conducted by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the School of Medicine at Al Mustansiriya University in Baghdad—was based on a preinvasion mortality rate and a postinvasion mortality rate. The former figure was based on figures publicized during Saddam Hussein's regime, and the latter figure was found by interviewing 1,849 households across the country from May 20 to July 10, 2006.

Researchers questioned household members about the number of deaths and the cause of death of Iraqis living in their homes. In about 92 percent of the cases, the researchers were shown death certificates. The survey found that mortality rates had risen from 2.6 per 1,000 people per year in 2003 to 14.2 per 1,000 people in 2006. Using the increased mortality rate, the researchers estimated that an average of 654,965 Iraqis died due to the invasion, about 2.5 percent of the population in the study areas. Of those deaths, 601,027 were believed to be due to violence.[295]

These numbers were far higher than other death toll counts, and the *Lancet* study must be put into context. The nearly 655,000 extra deaths were an average of the margin of error, which ranged from 392,979 to 942,636. Further, the study failed to take into account the invalidity of their preinvasion baseline mortality rate. The study assumed that the numbers provided during Saddam Hussein's propaganda regime were accurate—a lofty assumption.

Moreover, the study itself remarked on the difficulties of conducting such a survey under extremely violent conditions. The report also cites that around half of the household members interviewed did not know the exact cause of death. And the 92 percent of households that had death certificates—for 550,000 people—did not equate with the total number of deaths reported by the Baghdad Morgue and the Ministry of Health—50,000—which would supply information for death certificates.[296]

Finally, the study's findings did not make sense in the context of virtually all other reporting on the situation on the ground. If 600,000 Iraqis died violent deaths since 2003, at least that many would have been wounded, making the final tally beyond the realm of possibility. An analysis of the *Lancet* study states that the Iraqi Ministry of Health estimates about 2.9 wounded for every person killed. Applying that ratio to the 600,000 killed in violent deaths, the wounded would number 1,800,000. This estimate equates to 1 in every 15 Iraqis, or about 7 percent of the adult male population.[297] This figure is too large to go unrecorded by hospitals or the morgue. The death toll given by the Iraq Body Count of an average of 45,000 Iraqis killed up to October 2006 was far more reasonable.

In short, the overall mix of different forms of faulty reporting underscored an important lesson of war—the need for providing accurate and credible data. More generally, stability operations, humanitarian interventions, peacemaking, and armed nation building need an accurate picture of the level and nature of human suffering. Both "best-case" and "worst-case" estimates can be equally dangerous in setting the wrong priorities for action.

TRANSFERRING CONTROL TO IRAQI FORCES

U.S. forces continued to nominally transfer control to Iraqi forces, although the insurgency and civil conflict, in fact, left the ISF highly dependent on Coalition forces for combat support, artillery, airpower, armor, logistics, and information seeking and retrieval. In the fall of 2006, the quantity and confidence of ISF had increased, but so had the level of violence. Police forces, especially in Baghdad, continued to be accused of having militia components.

The number of men who had been trained and equipped for all the various Iraqi forces numbered 326,000 in December 2006—138,000 army and 188,000 police.[298] The number of available forces actually serving, however, was far lower due to desertions, authorized leave, and attrition. Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey estimated that the Iraqi Army lost 1,000 men per month due to attrition and desertion. In addition, according to the U.S. military, Prime Minister al-Maliki authorized the addition of 30,000 men to the Iraqi Army.[299]

The Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report to Congress for August–November made it clear that the number of trained and equipped ISF reported by MNF-I was far higher than the number that would report for duty; "The trained and equipped number should not be confused with present duty strength. The number of present for duty soldiers and police is much lower, due to scheduled leave, absence without leave, and attrition."[300] The report also said that the most significant challenge remaining for the ISF was the "reformation of the Ministry of Interior police force and the development of ISF logistics and sustainment capabilities."[301]

A September–October UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights Report said that the number of trained and equipped ISF reflected their ability to take over security control. UNAMI noted that "absenteeism is widespread and there are reports that in Kirkuk alone, half of the 5,000 police force and 13,000 Army soldiers, are not reporting to duty at any given time, and many fail to return to duty."[302]

The DoD report did say, however, that President Bush and Prime Minister al-Maliki had developed a working group to accelerate the training of the ISF, Iraqi assumption of operational control, and transfer of security responsibilities to Iraq. As of November 13, 2006, 6 Division Headquarters, 30 Brigade Headquarters, and 91 Iraqi Army battalions had assumed lead for counterinsurgency operations within their assigned areas of operations. Of these, however, "most still required substantial logistics and sustainment support from Coalition forces. Of the MOI's National Police's 27 authorized battalions, 5 are in the lead; of brigade headquarters, 1 is in

the lead." As of October 2006, MNF-I had handed off 52 of its 110 Forward Operating Bases to Iraqi authorities.[303]

Two provinces were handed over to Iraqi control in the fall of 2006. Italy formally handed over security responsibility of the southern Dhi Qar Province to Iraqi forces on September 21, 2006. The relatively peaceful province was the second of the country's 18 provinces to be handed over to Iraqi control by Coalition forces after the July transfer of power in Al-Muthanna Province. Around 1,860 Italian and 430 Romanian troops had been in charge of security in Dhi Qar. On December 20, 2006, U.S. forces handed over provincial control of Najaf Province to Iraq, making it the third province to be transferred.

Human Rights Issues in the ISF

Sectarian abuses by the ISF continued to be a major problem. The United States informed Iraq's interior minister in late September 2006 that the Iraqi police would lose vital U.S. aid unless action was taken against human rights violators. The United States was investigating violations of the Leahy Law, which prohibits the United States from financing security forces committing "gross violations of human rights."[304] The incident under investigation was the ISF-run prison in eastern Baghdad known as Site 4. In May, a joint U.S. and Iraqi inspection of Site 4 found evidence of abuse and torture. UN officials said that 52 arrest warrants were issued, but none were carried out. Iraqi Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani said that he had not taken further actions because he had not "received written confirmation that indictments had been handed up." Ambassador Khalilzad said that the Iraqi government had been notified of the investigation, but that he was sure the Interior Ministry would take whatever action was necessary to avoid violations of the Leahy Law.[305]

On November 6, 2006, the Interior Ministry officially charged 57 employees with human rights crimes for their roles in the Site 4 abuses. They included 20 commissioned officers, 20 noncommissioned officers, and 17 policemen and civilians. The accused would face criminal trials in upcoming months and all were dismissed from their MOI jobs. UN officials said the charges were positive steps for the Iraqi government and that it was hoped investigations into other human rights abuses would follow.

Army Maj. Gerald Ostlund, a U.S. spokesman on ISF training, said, "This is one step of many [Jawad al-Bolani] needs to take in this direction," but he added, "You fire somebody from the government here, what have you turned them into? What have they become the day after? Sometimes it is better to keep your enemies closer than your friends."[306]

The UNAMI report stated that the ISF faced "formidable challenges to [their] professional integrity and reputation as a result of their inability to defend the Iraq population from terrorist, sectarian, or revenge attacks." The UNAMI report, however, did commend the Ministry of Interior for taking steps to increase the diversity

of the Public Order Division in Ninawa Province and for dismissing ISF that had conducted sectarian acts of violence.[307]

U.S. Training Efforts

The rising level of civil conflict also made training Iraqi Army and police recruits more difficult for U.S. and other Coalition troops. In efforts to create trust between civilians and Iraqi forces, U.S. forces put a greater effort into screening new recruits than in the past. However, U.S. trainers spent more time eliminating recruits with militia links than training accepted Iraqis.

Coalition forces across Iraq also found that the security situation rapidly deteriorated soon after most transfers of authority to Iraqi troops. For example, on September 20, U.S. forces handed over control to the ISF in Saba Al-Bor. The U.S.–trained and equipped 150-man Iraqi force in the mixed Sunni and Shi'ite town was expected to easily monitor the relatively passive area. But two weeks after the United States pulled out, Sunni insurgents hit Saba Al-Bor with 44 mortars, provoking a strong response from Shi'ite militias flocking to the town. The violence prompted the U.S. Army to return only 15 days after it left. U.S. troops said that they found 42 bodies within their first day and that roughly 45,000 of the town's 60,000 residents had fled. The Iraqi police chief fled when the insurgents attacked, and the new chief said he could account only for 24 of the 150 policemen. U.S. troops took heavy casualties as they tried to stop sectarian death squads from bringing the civil war to another town.[308]

Even so, senior U.S. military officers remained optimistic in their public reports of the progress of the ISF. Maj. Gen. Joseph Peterson, head of the Civilian Assistance Training Team, said that the progress since the fall of 2005 was considerable, "A year ago we had a situation where a police station was attacked, and policemen were running out the backdoor leaving all the equipment. That does not occur anymore. Our policemen are more confident."[309]

CENTCOM's General Abizaid said he remained confident in the overall ability of Iraqi troops, but recognized weaknesses: "I think that sometimes here in the US we tend to believe that every Iraqi unit's not doing their duty. That's not true. Most Iraqi units are doing their duty. Most Iraqi units are going into the field and fighting for their country. No doubt there are difficulties in some Iraqi units, and in the national police there's more difficulties." He said that one of the most difficult tasks in training Iraqi forces stemmed from the fact that Shi'a had long looked to militias for protection and support and that it took time to change that way of thinking.[310]

Lawmakers close to Prime Minister al-Maliki said that he wanted increased control over the ISF, particularly in Baghdad.[311] But the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff announced in late November that two or three battalions of American troops were being sent to Baghdad from elsewhere in Iraq—possibly Mosul.[312] After meeting with President Bush in Jordan, al-Maliki said that the ISF would be able to take over control of security by June 2007.[313]

The prime minister's assertion, however, was called sharply into question in the fall, as it became obvious that the ISF lacked the training, equipment, and force numbers they needed to take control of the volatile security crisis. Even the most capable of Iraqi Army forces, the 9th Mechanized Division, demonstrated that it still needed the support of U.S. forces in combat. A joint U.S.–Iraqi raid in Baghdad's Sunni Fadhil District turned into an ambush by some 100 insurgents, and the 9th Division crumbled under fear and pressure. U.S. troops acknowledged that the fighting was tough and the insurgent's attacks were coordinated, but Iraqi troops either froze or fired their weapons wildly. The raid had originally been planned as an Iraqi-led operation, but U.S. soldiers said that they took over within minutes.[314] U.S. troops said that some Iraqi soldiers refused to move into the buildings when the insurgent attacks came or they started firing at will toward friend and foe. Some ISF jumped into their trucks and tried to back away. Both U.S. and Iraqi soldiers acknowledged significant collateral damage. In the end, U.S. and Iraqi troops killed 20 insurgents and detained 43, but the result would clearly have been different without the U.S. soldiers.[315]

Further, an American advisor said that the 9th Division had at most 68 percent of its force at any given time. U.S. commanders acknowledged that more preparation time would have significantly helped the ISF, which had only three hours' notice. Yet the incident drew into question the ability of the ISF to stay and fight when challenged.[316]

These problems led the U.S. military to announce that it planned to significantly increase the advisor effort in early 2007. At the end of 2006, some 3,500 U.S. advisors were operating inside Iraqi Army and police units, but several thousand more were expected to join in the effort.[317] The United States said that the number of advisors in Iraq could triple or quadruple. U.S. commanders were training officers already in Iraq to take on the advisor role so as to not overstretch the U.S. Army any further. An advisor team leader said, "[Advisors] will have to come from resources in the country. As you stand up the teams, you stand down the combat units." Pentagon officials said that the end goal was to create teams of 20–30 advisors for each Iraqi battalion.[318]

U.S. officials and commanders still issued plans for the quick handover of security to Iraqis, particularly in Baghdad, but the military reality was that the growth of the insurgency and civil violence continued to outpace progress in the ISF. Neither the Americans nor the Iraqis had enough troops to combat the rising level of violence and engage is substantial training efforts. Within the training effort, the United States shifted from a strategy of building up the Iraqi police to address internal security concerns to beefing up the Iraqi Army, which was more trusted and less sectarian than the police.[319]

Logistics Problems

Transferring control to Iraqi forces was also hampered by logistic problems. The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction said in a report in late October

that the U.S. military had not properly tracked weapons given to the ISF. The military did not record the serial numbers of the almost 500,000 weapons provided to Iraqis. The weapons included "rocket-propelled grenade launchers, assault rifles, machine guns, shotguns, semiautomatic pistols, and sniper rifles."[320]

Furthermore, of the semiautomatic pistols purchased and stored in Iraqi warehouses, roughly 13,000 were unaccounted for, and the military had no way of tracking them. The military also failed to provide Iraqis with spare parts and maintenance for their weapons. And military officials said that they could not provide information on the numbers of Iraqi logistics officers trained because of a computer crash that erased records. The U.S. military acknowledged the shortcomings and stated that it had begun tracking weapon serial numbers in mid-2006.[321]

The U.S. military said that it was seeking a contractor to provide armor for 1,300 sport utility vehicles used by the Iraqi National Police on December 16, 2006. In the previous two years many Iraqi policemen were killed or wounded by small-arms fire and IEDs while operating in their U.S.–issued vehicles. The United States received complaints throughout the training process that the ISF were underequipped.[322]

Militia Infiltration into the ISF

Police forces continued to be accused of supporting militia components. Iraqi police were not trusted by Sunnis and some Shi'ites, and the Iraqi Army did not have the force strength or training to secure the country. Colonel Miska of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division told the *New York Times* in late December 2006 about the most difficult problems he faced in training Iraqi security forces. He believed "everyone, to some extent, is influenced by the militias. While some Iraqi security forces may be complicit with militias, others fear for their families when confronting the militia, and that is the more pervasive threat."[323]

Miska said that one of the primary problems was that the Iraqi Army answered to the Ministry of Defense, the police answered to the Ministry of Interior, and the FPS did not really answer to anybody. His main goal was to try and establish some kind of unity of command on the battlefield. He described the situation as "an orchestra where everybody is playing a different song."[324]

The U.S. military recognized the need to rein in the Facilities Protection Service and announced an initiative to control the 150,000-member ministerial guard force. The Iraq Study Group described the force as having "questionable loyalties and capabilities."[325] Many FPS troops were employed by the Health Ministry—controlled by al-Sadr—and were believed to be members of the Mahdi Army. The Department of Defense report, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," said there was only "anecdotal evidence" that the FPS was incapable, but the evidence seemed to point to widespread corruption and sectarian loyalties.[326]

Al-Maliki announced in August 2006 that the FPS would be consolidated and brought under the wing of the Interior Ministry, and that process finally began in early 2007. Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey, U.S. Commander of the Multi-National

Security Transition Command in Iraq, said that he would work closely with the MOI to make sure the FPS was brought under control.[327]

Further, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights Report for November—December said, "Iraqi law enforcement institutions are marred by corruption and increasing internal and sectarian divisions. Iraqi police are seen as having being infiltrated by or colluding with militias, insurgency and political parties, depending on the area where they operate."[328]

In late December Iraqi officials were working on efforts to reform the Iraqi police forces and weed out the roughly 25 percent of policemen thought to have ties with militias, according to U.S. Lieutenant General Dempsey. In a Pentagon news conference, Dempsey said, "My message to you is that Iraq is reaching out to take control of its own security." He also said that for the most part, Iraqi policemen did not support sectarian violence, but the exception was the National Police.[329]

In some cases, direct action was taken against sectarian elements in the Iraqi forces. On December 22, 2006, nearly 1,000 British troops carried out a dawn raid in Basra to seize an Iraqi police chief accused of sectarian attacks. A British military spokesman said, "The purpose of this raid is not just to apprehend this individual, but it is the precursor to disbanding the Serious Crimes Unit of the Basra police." There was evidence that the police chief was involved in the death of 17 employees of a British-run police training academy.[330]

Three days later a combined British and Iraqi force of 1,400 again raided the police station and razed it to the ground. Troops killed seven gunmen and rescued 127 prisoners being held by the Serious Crimes Unit in Basra. The British military said that most prisoners showed signs of torture and were held in very poor conditions.

Basra's police chief condemned the raid, but residents in Basra privately told reporters that they welcomed the end of the Unit because it was widely infiltrated by militias and used terrorist tactics. Policemen belonging to the Serious Crimes Unit attacked British and Iraqi forces as they moved through Basra in the predawn raid, but troops faced little resistance as they reached the police station. The prisoners were handed over to the regular Iraqi police in Basra.[331]

Public Opinion on Iraqi Security Forces

Iraqi views regarding their security forces reflected Iraq's growing sectarian divisions and the problems created by the fact that MOI forces had been infiltrated by Shi'ite militias. At the same time, most Iraqis wanted the United States to withdraw. As shown in Figure 10.24, 53 percent of all Iraqis felt that the ISF forces were strong enough to address security challenges on their own, compared with only 39 percent in January. Similarly, 46 percent thought that Iraq would still need the support of military forces from other countries, which was down from 59 percent six months earlier.

This augmented confidence was driven by a jump from 45 percent to 68 percent of Shi'a believing in the Iraqi security forces. Kurds also felt more confident in the

Figure 10.24 Iraqi Attitudes toward the Security Situation in Iraq in September 2006

	(Support shown in percent)			
	Total	**Kurd**	**Shi'ite Arab**	**Sunni Arab**
Attacks on U.S.–Led Forces in Iraq				
Approve	61%	15%	62%	92%
Attacks on Iraqi Government Forces				
Strongly Approve	–	–	–	1%
Approve Somewhat	–	–	–	15%
Disapprove Somewhat	28%	–	–	59%
Strongly Disapprove	68%	–	–	29%
Attacks on Iraqi Civilians				
Strongly Approve	0%	–	–	–
Approve Somewhat	0%	–	–	–
Disapprove Somewhat	3%	–	–	4%
Strongly Disapprove	97%	–	–	95%
What Should the New Iraqi Government Ask the United States to Do about U.S.–Led Forces?				
Withdraw all in 6 months	37%	11%	36%	57%
Withdraw all in 1 year	34%	24%	38%	34%
Withdraw all in 2 years	20%	34%	20%	7%
Wait till situation improves	9%	31%	9%	2%
Do You Think the U.S. Military in Iraq Is				
A stabilizing force?	21%	56%	17%	2%
Provoking more conflict than preventing?	78%	41%	82%	97%
Effect of U.S. Withdrawal on Violence and Security on				
Amount of interethnic violence				
Increase	38%	–	–	–
No effect	4%	–	–	–
Decrease	58%	–	57%	72%
Day-to-day security				
Increase	61%	49%	57%	78%
No effect	5%	–	–	–
Decrease	34%	41%	–	–
How Capable Are Iraqi Security Forces?				
Strong enough now	53%	40%	68%	24%
Still need foreign help	46%	57%	–	–
How much confidence do you have in the forces that protect your security?				
Police				
Some/a lot	71%	–	–	–
None/a little	30%	–	–	–
Iraqi Army				
Some/a lot	64%	79%	65%	54%
None/a little	37%	–	–	54%
Interior Ministry				
Some/a lot	62%	–	–	–
None/a little	38%	–	–	–

Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "The Iraqi Public on the US Presence and the Future of Iraq," September 27, 2006, polling conducted September 1–4, sample of 1,150 from all 18 governorates.

ISF; 40 percent trusted in them as opposed to only 22 percent in January, although 57 percent of Kurds still felt that military aid from other countries was necessary (see Figure 10.24).

On the other hand, Sunni confidence in the ability of the ISF dropped from 38 percent to 24 percent. The Iraqi Army elicited the greatest confidence from all three groups, with 64 percent of all Iraqis saying they had "a lot/some" confidence in the army. The police received a 71 percent vote of confidence, but it was overwhelmingly Shi'a (see Figure 10.24).

Most Iraqis disapproved of attacks on the security forces and civilians. Ninety-six percent "somewhat disapproved/strongly disapproved" of attacks on the ISF, up 3 percent from January. A full 100 percent of those polled disapproved of attacks on civilians.[332]

A Department of State poll found that Sunni youth support of the ISF was minimal. The majority of Sunni youths opposed enlisting in army and police forces. In Shi'a areas, the poll found that most youths expressed support for local militias rather than the ISF as a whole.[333]

THE PROBLEMS OF RULE OF LAW AND CORRUPTION

All of the Iraqi political, military, and economic problems that helped to fuel the insurgency and intensify civil conflict interacted with a lack of an effective rule of law and capability of government. The rule of law suffered from overcrowded prisons, insufficient numbers of judges and attorneys who experienced constant threats on their lives, rapidly conducted and inadequate trials, and a lack of communication among U.S. forces, Iraqi forces, and the Iraqi government. The high level of corruption in the government and the ministries provided a poor example to other institutions. Favoritism, nepotism, and mismanagement of money at the local and provincial levels often had sectarian ties and contributed to the control of economic and political space by ethnic groups.

The August–November Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report stated, "Political stability in Iraq is predicated on achieving the rule of law. The rule of law requires a functional legal code, police to investigate crimes and enforce laws, criminal and civil courts to administer justice, and prisons to incarcerate offenders."[334] The Pentagon assessed, however, "Although progress continues, development and implementation of rule of law initiatives has been slow, contributing to crime, corruption, and the proliferations of illegal armed groups. Mistrust between the police forces and the judiciary further hampers progress in the development of the rule of law."[335]

The Pentagon's update reported on the many problems in Iraqi courts. The constitution allowed suspects to see a judge within 24 hours, but that rarely happened due to "an acute shortage of investigative judges, prosecutors, judicial investigators, and trial judges, and systemic inefficiencies, including the lack of cooperation and communication between the police and the judiciary."[336]

In November 2006, Iraq had 800 investigative and trial judges and 100 courts—not nearly enough for the massive number of detainees. The Iraqi government instituted several training programs to try and increase the number of judges for 2007. The DoD report noted that corruption in the judiciary was less rampant than other areas of the government, but instead the problem was "judicial intimidation and lack of security."[337] Throughout the insurgency and civil conflict, judges received threats and were frequently attacked. This intimidation thus led judges to "fail to report to work, resign from their positions, fear reaching verdicts against powerful defendants, and, in the provinces, decline to investigate and try insurgent and terrorism related cases."[338] The DoD report called for a judicial security force and a more secure court system that would help the retention rate of judges.[339]

The November "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report also said that Ministry of Interior detention facilities in Iraq "are overcrowded, with substandard facilities and poor accountability for persons detained." Ministry of Defense detention facilities were acceptable, but housed only postconviction criminals.[340]

As for corruption in the political ministries, the report stated,

> Corruption in the ministries had hampered their capabilities. Many of Iraq's political factions tend to view government ministries and their associated budgets as sources of power, patronage, and funding for their parties. Ministers without strong party ties face significant pressure from political factions and sometimes have little control over the politically appointed and connected people serving under them. This corruption erodes public confidence in the elected government.[341]

The November–December 2006 UNAMI Human Rights Report also summarized the rule of law in Iraq:

> Conditions of detention, including overcrowding and poorly run facilities, as well as lack of judicial oversight remain the main human rights concerns. Many detainees, especially in the south, are kept in facilities that are reportedly not fit for human use. Furthermore, the current number of detainees that need to be brought before a judge continues to outstrip the capacity of the Iraqi criminal courts to adjudicate cases. HRO [Human Rights Office] recognizes the enormous challenges faced by the Iraqi judiciary, especially in the current security context. The work of the judiciary is further hampered by the repeated disregard of judicial orders by the police and by the constant threats and actual killing of judges which calls into question the independence of the judiciary and the genuine commitment by the authorities to develop a State based on the rule of law.[342]

The UNAMI Human Rights Report said that the lack of judges and lawyers and the hastily compiled court system were the basis of the problem. Lawyers assigned by the court to represent Iraqi- and U.S.–held detainees met their defendants only minutes before trials began. Judges often ignored requests by lawyers to present arguments—in the cases that lawyers knew what crime the defendant had allegedly committed. An American lawyer said that in the 100 cases he tried, none of the defense attorneys had presented evidence or witnesses. Trials lasted 15 minutes on average

as judges attempted to reduce the numerous detainee population. Since 2003, the United States held about 61,500 prisoners and at the end of 2006 held 14,000, but only 3,000 had been charged and tried in Iraqi courts. No numbers were available on Iraqi-held detainees.[343]

It said that Iraqi judges sometimes handed out severe sentences when defendants had no time to call witnesses or talk with their lawyers. In 2006, judges committed 14 American-held detainees to death by hanging. U.S. forces, however, complained that the Iraqi government requested the release of tens of thousands of detainees—6 percent of whom the United States recaptured in other criminal acts. The Iraqi courts acquitted roughly half of the defendants at the end of 2006, but it was often because of "political interference, and threats from militants"[344] on judges' lives. However, in about 4 percent of cases, the United States did not release detainees who had been acquitted by Iraqi courts because they remained a "serious threat."[345]

The U.S. military responded by trying to acquire better evidence at crime scenes. U.S. soldiers-turned-detectives used forensic evidence and photography to better present cases against alleged criminals. Yet individuals were often mass arrested at crime scenes and put into the overcrowded detention facilities where it took weeks to release those who had simply been at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Corruption was an equally serious problem. In an interview with *The Guardian,* Stuart Bowen of the office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) said that Iraq was in danger of being brought down by a "second insurgency." Bowen defined the "second insurgency" as smuggling of oil and widespread corruption. The "virtual pandemic" of corruption cost Iraq roughly $4 billion a year.[346]

In late September 2006, the government did take a step toward greater transparency. Al-Maliki's government issued arrest warrants for 88 former Iraqi officials wanted on corruption charges. Of the 88, 15 were former ministers—including the former Electricity Minister, Ayham al-Amarie, former Defense Minister, Hazam Shaalan, another former Electricity Minister, Muhssin Shalash, and the ministers of Labor, Transportation, and Housing. The spokesman for the Public Integrity Commission running the investigation said that 61 of the 88 were "living as fugitives abroad." The commission announced the loss of U.S.$7.5 billion through corruption since 2003.[347]

The level of corruption in Iraq at the end of 2006 was illustrated by the black market for weapons. The October SIGIR Quarterly stated that roughly 4 percent—about 14,000 weapons—were lost in the process of being transferred to Iraqi security forces, none of which the U.S. military had records of.[348] A *New York Times* report, however, offered an even bleaker assessment of the ultimate destination of American weapons.[349] The 4 percent reported by SIGIR did not include weapons sold by Iraqi security forces on the black market. The weapons, mostly pistols, often brought more money than several months' pay for the ISF. Deserters from the police and army sold their weapons on the black market for an increasingly larger price as Sunnis and Shi'a across Iraq armed themselves for widespread civil conflict. The ISF also sometimes reported that their weapons were "stolen."

The weapons black market underscored the problems of U.S. reconstruction and development in Iraq. The rapidly distributed weapons were expected to accelerate the training of the ISF, but most pistols ended up in the hands of those fighting U.S. and Iraqi forces, according to the *Times* article.[350] The U.S. military said that it began tracking serial numbers on weapons sent to Iraq, but it appeared that a large number of the 138,000 Glock pistols and 165,000 Kalashnikov rifles were already in other hands.[351]

In early November corruption watchdog Transparency International (TI) rated Iraq in the bottom three most corrupt countries in 2006. TI said that the ongoing violence in Iraq led to the breakdown of "checks and balances, law enforcement and the functioning of institutions like the judiciary and legislature. If all that is under strain the very system that works to prevent corruption is undermined."[352]

RECONSTRUCTION, DEVELOPMENT, AND AID

The failures in effective rule of law, conciliation, ISF training, and Coalition warfighting were compounded by a deteriorating economic situation. Reconstruction efforts continued to be severely hampered by the security crisis and the lack of and misuse of funding and did not take place or were crippled in many high-threat areas. Economic growth in 2006 hit 4 percent—well below the 10-percent goal—inflation lingered around 50 percent, and unemployment averaged about 40 percent, although it reached 60 percent in Anbar Province.[353]

The key standard of local reconstruction was supposed to be the Department of State's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Ten PRTs were at least partially operational by late October 2006, according to an audit by SIGIR. The goal of the PRTs was to "provide grassroots support in the development of nationwide governance capacity in Iraq."[354] PRTs included personnel from numerous U.S. civilian departments, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), MNF-I, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. SIGIR reviewed nine PRTs and found that "four were generally able, four were somewhat able, three were less able, and two were generally unable to carry out their PRT mission."[355] SIGIR noted that civilian and military personnel were effectively working together and that there were sufficient resources and personnel to meet expectations in 2007.

However, the deepening security crisis presented serious barriers to the PRTs' mission. Most importantly, PRT members could not travel easily or meet face-to-face with their Iraqi counterparts. The PRTs were also expected to suffer from recruiting problems in the future. The security problem was deemed the worst at the PRT offices in Anbar and Basra, and SIGIR suggested putting those missions on hold until the security crisis eased. Finally, SIGIR commended the efforts by the rapidly compiled PRTs and said that efforts on the part of individuals were allowing the teams to move forward with development in some areas.[356]

Figure 10.25 shows the PRTs' classification of readiness of Iraqi provinces. Anbar and Basra provinces were deemed the least ready for Iraqi control, and Baghdad was

Figure 10.25 The Unready Judges the Unready: Provincial Security Transition Team Assessment

Anbar	Not Ready for Transition
Ninewa	Partially Ready for Transition
Dahuk	Ready for Transition
Arbil	Ready for Transition
Sulamaniyah	Ready for Transition
Tamim	Partially Ready for Transition
Salah ad Din	Partially Ready for Transition
Diyala	Partially Ready for Transition
Baghdad	Partially Ready for Transition
Karbala	Partially Ready for Transition
Babil	Partially Ready for Transition
Wasit	Partially Ready for Transition
Najaf	Partially Ready for Transition
Qadisiyah	Partially Ready for Transition
Muthanna	Provincial Iraqi Control
Dhi Qar	Provincial Iraqi Control
Maysan	Partially Ready for Transition
Basra	Not Ready for Transition

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 28

partially ready. These projections by the PRTs, however, were not based on sufficient evidence and did not reflect the reality on the ground.

The issue of aid suffered from similar deficiencies. The U.S. government, USAID, and the Army Corps of Engineers failed to manage some $38 billion in U.S. and Iraqi funds with anything approaching core competence and integrity. Many projects—as many as $10 billion worth—were crippled by ineffective management and corruption. A SIGIR audit on reconstruction efforts found that the Baghdad Police College, contracted to Parsons Corporation, posed an extreme health and security risk to recruits. Water ran down walls throughout the building and part of it needed to be demolished. Federal auditors monitoring Iraq's reconstruction looked at the rest of Parson Corporation's projects and found that 13 of 14 failed to meet standards. The project had originally been praised for providing much needed employment to Iraqis.[357] The Army Corps of Engineers was in charge of overseeing the project. Maj. Gen. William H. McCoy, Jr., Chief Army Engineer for Iraq reconstruction, said that the Corps did a poor job of monitoring the construction and was investigating the deficiencies.[358]

SIGIR did point out some successful development projects. These included the Al Karakh Courthouse, village roads in Thi Qar, a critical care unit at Ibn Al Bitar Hospital, the Baghdad Municipal Solid Waste Landfill, and the Bab Eshtar Substation. These projects were all completed or nearing completion at the end of 2006. However, security problems compromised the use of some of the buildings, particularly the Baghdad landfill, as well as SIGIR's ability to properly assess progress.[359]

MNF-I spokesman Major General Caldwell also said that in 2006, 146 water and sewage projects, 140 educational projects, 57 medical and public health projects, and 37 agricultural projects began.[360] In addition, the October quarterly update for the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (IRRF) highlighted a number of the projects completed in the quarter, but also acknowledged continued challenges and the failure to approach Iraqi needs and expectations. Key individual areas of progress included the following:[361]

- Completed nine Gas-Oil Separation Plant rehabilitation projects in the south.
- Completed hot gas path inspections of two Siemens V94.2 generators and combustion inspections on two other V94.2 generators at the Baiji Power Station . . . The increased capacity will provide electrical power to an additional 27,000 homes.
- Significant progress was made in improving the supply of clean potable water and reducing waste discharge.
- Completed construction of Special Police Regiment Facilities in Taji.
- Completed construction of military facilities in Samara, Hammal Al Ali, Taji, and Diwaniya, supporting a total of 2,000 Iraqi soldiers.
- Completed construction of the Ministry of Electricity's Regional Wireless Communication Network, which provides an internal communications system using microwave and UHF, as well as integrating data and voice communications.
- Completed a series of improvements at the Baghdad International Airport.

The report also said that in the fall of 2006 USAID had started a "longer-term, self-sustaining, national capacity development program that focuses on strengthening and expanding Iraq's existing civil service training institutes in Baghdad and the provinces."[362]

High levels of Iraqi and U.S. corruption, gross U.S. incompetence, and the more pressing need for security overshadowed limited real successes. Moreover, almost all of the funds appropriated to the IRRF were committed and the trend line for future economic assistance from the United States sloped downward. And of the $13.5 billion pledged by international donors for reconstruction, only $4 billion was delivered. As the need for reconstruction projects in Iraq increased, it appeared that economic support faltered.[363]

Economic Indicators

Given the problems with civil violence, failed governance, and an effective aid program, it is hardly surprising that the economic situation affecting most Arab Sunnis and many Arab Shi'ites continued to deteriorate and clearly affected the security situation. Gen. Peter Chiarelli said in December 2006, "We need to put the angry young men to work. One of the key hindrances to us establishing stability in Iraq is the failure to get the economy going. A relatively small decrease in unemployment would have a very serious effect on the level of sectarian killing going on."[364]

The Pentagon's November report on "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" agreed: "High unemployment continued to feed sectarian, insurgents, and criminal activity."[365] For the first time, the report supported U.S.–Iraqi initiatives to create jobs in a nonsectarian manner: "Efforts to address unemployment and underemployment must be viewed as a top United States and Iraqi priority and be appropriately funded."[366]

The DoD report did mention Iraqi efforts of economic reform, such as raising gas prices and passing the Fuel Import Liberalization Law and the Investment Law. The International Monetary Fund indicated that nonoil gross domestic product growth would be 10 percent in 2006. On October 31, 2006, members of the International Compact finalized the compact and expected full approval. The compact had the potential to foster international investment in Iraq, but would most likely take several years to have a visible effect. However, "the Government of Iraq faces serious challenges in the economic sector and has made only incremental progress in economic reform and execution of its own budget and programs."[367]

In December the Pentagon announced plans to reinvigorate Iraq's economy by creating jobs in many of the country's violence-torn cities. The Pentagon team hoped to reestablish nearly 200 state-owned factories that had closed down after the departure of the Coalition Provisional Authority. The businesses could potentially employ 11,000 Iraqis by the new year. The task force was also searching for U.S. businesses to invest.

At the local level, ethnic groups seized control of the economic space through intimidation of opposite sects and nationalists. In violent ethnically mixed cities, such as Baquba, Baghdad, and many other areas outside the Kurdish zone, businesses were closed and thus the unemployment crisis was so severe that many young men joined sectarian groups to provide their families with food and shelter.

The Problem of Oil

The continuing failure of the Iraqi government to adopt a petroleum law (promised by year-end 2006) remained another major stumbling block to effective Iraqi government planning, developing a well-structured aid effort, and new investment, especially by the major oil companies, although smaller firms actively engaged in drilling in the north. Moreover, reports that Iraq set up a federal council for oil and gas (chaired by the prime minister) to "endorse all oil deals with foreign investors and observe their implementation" raised still more questions about both aid and Iraqi revenue plans and capabilities.[368] Regional distribution of oil revenues and control over new projects remained contentious issues, though definitions of what constitutes "new" oil vary based on who is doing the interpreting.

As for facilities, there were well over 300 "incidents" since the fall of Saddam and President Bush's "mission accomplished" announcement. These not only affected the integrity of the oil facilities but compounded Iraq's pipeline problems, some of which could not operate at their published rate throughput capacity without serious consequences.

Oil production remained below target levels. The oil industry suffered from infrastructure attacks and the inability of Iraq to refine crude oil. Oil exports failed to meet the goal of 1.7 million barrels per day (mbpd), and production fell short of the 2.5 mbpd goal. The new goal for oil production in 2007 was dropped to 2.1 mbpd. The week of January 8–14 saw average production at 1.72 mbdp, the lowest in some time.[369] However, oil still accounted for 90 percent of Iraq's government revenue in 2006, and some strides were made to increase production capacity.[370]

Moreover, the black market oil movements in the country, especially for refined products, remained high—and profitable. Metering of oil shipments and exports was still incomplete at best, and Iraq's production and export figures are both suspect and variable.

A SIGIR audit report in late September said that Iraq had lost $16 billion in "potential foreign sales [of oil] over two years to insurgent attacks, criminals, and bad equipment." Iraq was also paying billions to import refined petroleum products because they lacked the equipment to refine in Iraq. The audit stated that oil should have been Iraq's primary source of income—instead it was a sign of the country's failing infrastructure.[371]

There were, however, some positive steps. Iraq opened a small refinery near Najaf on October 7, 2006. The refinery had a capacity of 10,000 barrels per day (bpd)—enough to supply citizens and factories in Najaf Province. It was only the second refinery to open since the U.S.–led invasion. The Iraqi Oil Ministry announced plans to build a new 70,000-bpd refinery in Kowsinjaq and a 150,000-bpd refinery near Karbala. A large refinery with a 300,000-bpd capacity was planned for Basra. All the new refineries were strategically placed outside of the volatile central part of the country. Iraq's largest refinery at Baiji continued to experience frequent attacks on pipelines and oil tanker drivers. Placing new refineries in the north and the south of the country exacerbated Sunni concerns about the availability of oil in central Iraq if the country broke up into autonomous regions.[372]

The Turkish port of Ceyhan did resume importation of Iraqi oil in mid-October. Pumping had ceased for several months due to the security crisis and deterioration of the pipelines. Iraq's Northern Oil Company increased security efforts and was confident that exports to Turkey would be successful. However, the benefits of resumed exports were offset by the closure of the largest refinery in Baiji for the fourth day running. A refinery official said that electricity cuts caused the closure.[373]

According to Iraq's Oil Minister, Hussein al-Shahristani, Iraq produced an average of 2.3 mbpd in October and exported between 1.6 and 1.7 mbpd. He stated that production was expected to reach 3 mbpd by the end of 2006 and 4.5 mbpd by 2010.[374] Shahristani's expectations were unlikely to be met, however, as November saw a drop in production to 2.04 mbpd with 1.47 mbpd exported. The official goal set by the Iraqi government was 2.5 mbpd—a shortfall of 47 percent in November, 43 percent in October, and 33 percent in September. Oil produced a revenue only of $1.26 billion in November—and if SIGIR's assessment was correct—a good portion of that money was eaten away by corruption.[375]

The October–December Quarterly Report to Congress from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction said that in all of 2006 Iraqi crude oil production increased slightly from 2005, averaging 2.12 mbpd. The last quarter, however, saw average production drop to 2.07 mbpd. Average daily exports of crude oil increased 150,000 bpd from 2005, but also failed to meet the goal of 1.65 mbpd. SIGIR reported that oil constituted 93 percent of total Iraqi export earnings in 2006.[376]

The Problem of Electricity

The problem of electricity had plagued nation-building efforts since the start of the war. Insurgents continued to use the same tactics against electricity and power lines that they had in 2003. The security situation deteriorated to the point that it was impossible to provide electricity to some of the most dangerous areas, which included large swaths of Baghdad and Diyala provinces.

The August–November "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report said that during the reporting period the average daily peak generating output was 4,650 megawatts—78 percent of the Iraqi government's goal. Government-produced electricity averaged 11 hours during the reporting period, but Baghdad averaged only 6 hours per day. Interdiction of lines in other parts of the country also caused spotty power. In addition, "Almost half of Iraqis reported supplementing government supplied electricity with private generators to fill the supply gap. The shortfall between government-supplied electricity and demand is aggravated by the absence of a rational fee-for-service tariff system that would encourage conservation and reduce the effects of corruption."[377]

As Figure 10.26 shows, Baghdad received on average considerably less electricity than the rest of the nation. In the week ending January 10, 2007, Baghdad received only an average of three hours of electricity. The level of daily electricity supplied varied over time, but showed little real increase since 2004. The electricity supplied was roughly 55 percent of the national demand at the end of 2006, according to U.S. estimates, and this was supply into the grid. In much of the country, fighting and theft meant that power lines were gone or never installed, and no one could begin to measure how much power actually reached the people.[378]

The Electricity Ministry devised a plan to bring into Baghdad 100 generators by the summer of 2007 as well as construction of new power lines. The plan would cost $27 billion over ten years, but the supply of electricity could not meet demand until 2009, at the earliest, and experts predicted the earlier real-world date might be 2013. The ministry also planned to create a "centralized, automated control system to move electricity around a now antiquated grid run by engineers who had to manually throw switches at power stations and substations scattered around the country."[379]

The Problem of Education and a "Brain Drain"

The fight for sectarian control of political and economic space now affected much of Iraq's educational activity and the purging of academic moderates from

Figure 10.26 Average Daily Hours* of Electrical Power per Province, October 2006

Anbar	>16
Ninawa	12–16
Dahuk	>16
Arbil	12–16
Tamim	12–16
Sulaymaniyah	12–16
Salah ad Din	>16
Diyala	9–11
Baghdad	<8
Karbala	12–16
Babil	9–11
Wasit	9–11
Najaf	9–11
Muthanna	12–16
Dhi Qar	>16
Qadisiyah	9–11
Maysan	12–16
Basra	12–16

* Hours of power measures generation, not transmission and distribution. Not all Iraqis receive the amount of power indicated for their province on this chart.

Source: "Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 1006, p. 16.

universities, and sectarianism in schools all the way down to the elementary school level promised to create sectarianism in future generations. A large number of educators also fled the country, looking for reprieve from the constant threats to their lives.

The September–October UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights report cited the grave situation facing education in Iraq. As of the end of October, schools in remote areas of Baghdad still had not opened for the 2006 school year. And according to statistics by the Ministry of Education, over 300 teachers and employees in the ministry were killed and additionally 1,158 were wounded in 2006 alone. The highest rate of assassinations of Iraq academics—44 percent—occurred in Baghdad, and Anbar, Mosul, and Basra each accounted for 10 percent of the total number of assassinations.

UNAMI reported that schools in Ramadi were particularly adversely affected. Almost all Ramadi schools did not open for the 2006 school year due to threats from al-Qa'ida. In Diyala Province, the Governorate Council said that 90 percent of the schools were closed due to the security situation.[380]

The Ministry of Education's statistics confirmed the crisis of Iraq's education system. In October 2006 only 30 percent of Iraq's 3.5 million students attended classes; attendance for the school year starting in September was a record low. According to the study group B*Russell*s Tribunal, at least 270 academics had been killed since the U.S.–led invasion in 2003.[381] A brain drain of Iraq's educated elite could prove disastrous to efforts to revive a middle class—particularly in Baghdad. Continued

sectarian violence in the streets will create a generation of children with incomplete education up through the high school level, making it difficult to find jobs and opening the door for recruitment into militias. Further, unemployment in Iraq remained between 30 and 45 percent in the fall of 2006.

Students feared car bombs and IED attacks as they traveled sometimes long distances to universities. Female professors were repeatedly threatened to wear Islamic dress. A professor of political science at Baghdad University said, "A large number have left the country, while others have applied to go on prolonged sick leave. We are using recently graduated MA and PhD students to fill in the gaps."[382] Professors said they had to lower standards for students as well to help reduce daily pressure. Many wealthier families with university level students started sending their children abroad to finish their degrees—particularly to Egypt.

The problem was equally visible at lower levels of education. At a high school in Amariyah in Baghdad attendance was down 50 percent. Several teachers were also murdered in September, and the number of full-time faculty dropped from 42 to 20. Continued sectarian violence in the streets threatened to create a generation of children with incomplete education up through the high school level, making it difficult to find jobs and opening the door for recruitment into militias.

An elementary school teacher in Baghdad said that she saw the general trend of Sunni children leaving schools faster than Shi'ite children. For example, when parents of Sunni children found out that Mahdi Army men were guarding the school, they immediately withdrew their children. School children also reported being harassed by teachers and classmates if they had a popular Sunni name and attended a Shi'ite school, and vice versa. Instead of attending school, many children accepted $20 from insurgents to plant bombs; at the start of the war insurgents paid as much as $1,000 for that job.[383]

The Problem of Health Care

By the fall of 2006, the fighting helped cause a health-care crisis in Iraq that continued to have an adverse effect on the civilian population and contributed to the "brain drain," The Health Ministry was infiltrated by Shi'ite militias—most with ties to the Mahdi Army—and was unable to provide care for victims of sectarian violence, let alone serious illnesses.

The insurgency and civil war caused a dire shortage of medical equipment and qualified doctors. According to the Iraqi government, the child mortality rate increased since the U.S.–led invasion in 2003 from 125 deaths per 1,000 births in 2002 to 130 deaths per 1,000 births in 2006.[384] Sunni religious leaders additionally accused the Shi'ite-run Health Ministry of withholding supplies from Sunni civilians. Doctors said that they lacked the means to treat heart attacks, cancer, and many lacked even x-ray machines. A pharmacist in Taji said he was running out of "medicine, blood bags, oxygen, anesthetics, vaccines, and IV fluids."[385] Since 2003, the United States had spent $493 million on health care in Iraq. However, the $50 million children's hospital in Basra had yet to open and had cost an additional $40

million. A plan to create 150 primary health-care centers in Iraq was scaled back to 142, but as of November 2006, only 6 had opened—5 of which were in Shi'ite neighborhoods in Baghdad. The Iraqi Health Ministry spent $1.1 billion in 2006 compared with $22 million in 2005. The ministry spent 55 percent of the budget on medication and medical supplies and 33 percent on salaries.[386] Both Sunni and Shi'ite doctors were targets since the start of the war—455 medical workers were killed since 2003. The problem was exacerbated, however, by the fact that 7,000 workers fled the country in that same time frame. Only in the Kurdish north and Muthanna Province in the south were mortality rates not increasing. Similar to the case of education professionals, the attacks on doctors threatened to leave the country in a humanitarian crisis with insufficient medical supplies and health-care professionals.[387]

A doctor working in a Baghdad hospital said,

> In my opinion, the health sector needs highly competent people. The Sadrists have no experience in this area and do not have an elite capable of leading such a ministry. The consequences are horrendous. Most doctors have left because of the behavior of the Sadrist clerics. They do not have any medical degree yet interfere in all aspects of our work, including medical diagnoses. Every hospital has its own mullah who gives order in the name of waliyat al-faqih [rule of the jurisprudent] or of who knows what else they come up with.[388]

And an Iraqi journalist interviewed by International Crisis Group in early December also agreed:

> The Health Ministry is being purged on sectarian grounds. Sunnis are identified and killed, whether in hospitals or in the ministry itself. A few days ago, Ahmed Mohamed, a pharmacist, was killed by militiamen in the ministry parking lot. This was done under the eyes of Iraqi security forces responsible for the ministry's safety, yet infiltrated by militias.[389]

THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE STATES

Outside states continued to play a role in making things worse. Iraqi leaders steadily complained about interference by outside states in internal affairs. In an interview on September 26, 2006, with *National Public Radio,* President Talabani warned that if other governments continued to instigate violence, "the Iraqi people will respond in the same way—we'll support the opposition of other countries [and] try to make trouble for them as they are doing for us. . . Iraq can help opposing forces of our neighboring countries." Talabani referred specifically to Iran, Turkey, and Syria, the former two of which had significant Kurdish minorities seeking greater independence.[390]

In November 2006, Prime Minister al-Maliki also indicated that neighboring countries were interfering in Iraq's affairs. He said, "The issue of security is one that

is worrying us. We must say 'stop' to foreign intervention if we are to protect Iraq... We want to live in peace with our neighbors."[391]

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice rejected negotiations with Syria and Iran saying that the compensation required would be too great.[392] However, the August–November Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" update said, "The United States is facilitating regional negotiations on mutual interests and can help find common ground on contentious transnational issues."[393] The DoD report also stated the following regarding Iran and Syria:

> Iran and Syria are undermining the Government of Iraq's political progress by providing both active and passive support to anti-government and anti-Coalition forces. The Coalition and the Government of Iraq have attempted to counter Iranian and Syrian influence diplomatically and by tightening security at the borders.[394]

Syria

As previous chapters have shown, Syria tolerated and supported Sunni neo-Salafi extremist operations on its territory in spite of its Alawite-controlled government. Syria continued to play a role in passively supporting the insurgency and civil conflict through 2006. The August–November 2006 "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report by the Department of Defense said the following of Syria:

> Despite repeated warnings by the United States, the Syrian regime continues to provide safe haven, border transit, and limited logistical support to Iraqi insurgents, especially elements associated with the former Iraqi Ba'ath Party. The Syrians also permit former regime elements to engage in organizational activities, such that Syria has emerged as an important organizational and coordination hub for elements of the former Iraqi regime. Syria has taken a relatively pragmatic approach in dealing with Islamic extremist groups, such as al-Qaeda in Iraq and foreign fighters; although it has detained and deported many foreign fighters, Syria has allowed others to transit to Iraq.[395]

In early October Syria decided to move troops from the Iraqi border to its border with Lebanon. The Syrian ambassador to the United States said that the nation lacked the resources to maintain forces at both borders. He criticized the United States for not offering Syria any help in securing the border. He said, "At one point the US was exerting pressure on Syria that we must put more and more troops on the Iraqi-Syrian border to keep insurgents from infiltrating. That was an almost impossible task. It is not our fault that you decided to invade and occupy Iraq." He added that Syria would be open to trade with a stable Iraq. The ambassador also expressed his concerns of spillover of civil conflict from Iraq into Syria.[396]

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem traveled to Baghdad to assure Iraq of Syria's support in November 2006. He said, "Syria's intensions toward Iraq are good in all times, and on that principle we are looking forward to a good relationship between Iraq and Syria that takes history and common interests into consideration."[397] He also called for a timeline for U.S. troop withdrawal.[398] The following

day, Syria and Iraq officially announced the restoration of diplomatic ties between the two countries after a 20-year hiatus.[399]

MNF-I Spokesman Major General Caldwell stated that some 50 to 70 foreign fighters passed through the Syrian border every month.[400] Four hundred Iraqi officers patrolled the entire border, but they lacked equipment and some stations did not even have electricity. American officials said that new technology, such as high-tech passport technology, was due to arrive in the next six months. At that point, U.S. troops believed that Iraqi border patrol forces would be "competent," but it could be years till they could sustain themselves.[401]

The United States continued to back away from direct talks with Syria. David Satterfield, Department of State Coordinator for Iraq, said in a November 15, 2006, hearing at the Senate Armed Service Committee, "We believe the Syrian government is well aware of our concerns and the steps required to address those concerns. But Syria had made a series of choices. And the last, the most significant and negative choice, was during the Lebanon war, when Syria cast its lot, as it remains today, with Iran, with Hezbollah, with forces of violence and extremism. When that changes, we will, of course, respond."[402]

The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, newly accused Syria of supporting armed groups in Iraq. He said that Syria was allowing foreign insurgents to slip through the border. He said the Syrians, along with the Iranians, wanted a weak and divided Iraq.[403]

Iran

The role Iran played in Iraq steadily increased as the civil war in Iraq intensified. The Pentagon's August–November "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report summarized Iranian foreign influence in Iraq as follows:

> The Iranian government sees an unprecedented opportunity to bring Iraq into its sphere of influence and to prevent it from re-emerging as a threat to Iranian interests. Tehran also views the situation in Iraq through the prism of Iran's ongoing tension with the United States and the West—especially the continued presence of US forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf, which threatens to constrain Iran's regional ambitions. Iran seeks to ensure that the Coalition bears political, economic, and human casualty costs to deter future US regional intervention. To achieve these objectives, Iran continues to pursue a dual-track strategy of supporting Shi'a unity and a stable government in Iraq—either a functioning, unified Shi'a dominated central government or a federated state—on one hand, while facilitating militia activities in Iraq on the other. Iran has developed links to southern Iraq and the Kurdish region to facilitate access and perhaps to safeguard its interests in case Iraq were to split into a collection of sectarian enclaves.[404]

The United States continued to accuse Iran of supporting Shi'ite militia groups. A September GAO report cited the Director of National Intelligence as saying that Iran "provided guidance and training to select Iraqi Shi'a political groups and provided

weapons and training to Shi'a militant groups to enable anti-coalition attacks." According to the report, Iran also aided in the creation of IEDs used by Shi'ite militias in Iraq. The alleged support of militias reinforced Sunni fears of Iranian and Shi'ite domination in Iraq and propagated sectarian violence.[405]

A senior military official confirmed the results of the GAO report. He said that Iran sent "millions of dollars" to Sadr's Mahdi Army as well as the rogue elements that al-Sadr no longer had control over. Coalition and Iraqi troops had found Iranian surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank rockets, and explosively formed projectiles. The anonymous official said, "The control of military grade explosives in Iran is controlled through the state apparatus. . . It is a deliberate decision on the part of elements associated with the Iranian government to affect this type of activities."[406]

More than words were involved. In late December U.S. forces captured several Iranians in Iraq, acting on intelligence that they were plotting attacks against Iraqi civilians and U.S. and Iraqi forces. Two of them were released because they had diplomatic credentials, but at least four others were still being held. The White House said, "We suspect this event validates our claim about Iranian meddling," but the United States did not offer the evidence for the Iranians' capture.[407] A British official told the BBC that five of the men still held were intelligence officials who were "up to no good," and were in Iraq to influence Prime Minister al-Maliki.[408]

The Iranian government condemned the arrests and said that they could have "unpleasant consequences." A spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry said that President Talabani invited the two diplomats and four others to Iraq. The spokesman added, "The Iraqi government is responsible for their release, and the occupying forces should be held responsible based on international regulations."[409]

Coalition statements were, however, sometimes contradictory. For example, British Defense Secretary Des Browne said in October 2006, '"I have not myself seen any evidence—and I don't think any evidence exists—of government supported or instigated' armed support on Iran's part in Iraq."[410] Yet, U.S. Major General Caldwell said only a month later that although Iran had not sent fighters to Iraq, the Republic provided arms and training to Shi'ite militias.[411]

Iran rejected the U.S. charges. It said in December that it was already helping to stabilize Iraq and that there did not need to be an agreement with the United States. The Iranian ambassador to Iraq, Kazemi Qomi, said that Iran supported all Iraqis, not just Shi'a. He appeared disinterested with discussions in Washington over negotiating with Tehran, but clearly believed that a stable Iraq was in the best interest of Iran. "Security in Iraq will strip foreign troops of any pretext to prolong their presence in the country," he said. "Security in Iraq will deprive terrorists of any safe haven, and we will no longer see an influx of Iraqi [refugees] to Iran."[412]

Saudi Arabia

The southern Gulf States, Jordan, and Egypt showed steadily greater concern about the spread of sectarian war across the greater Middle East. In the latter half of 2006, the growing Sunni-Shi'ite sectarian conflict in Iraq helped push Saudi

Arabia into increased action. Saudi fears of the spread of civil war across the greater Middle East only augmented.

Saudi Arabia announced plans in September to build a fence along its border with Iraq. The $12 billion project included plans for electronic sensors, security bases, and physical barriers. Saudis worried, in particular, about the possibility of a Shi'ite uprising in the Kingdom among the minority living around the oil-rich areas. Sunni extremists returning to Saudi Arabia from Iraq could also cause trouble for the monarchy. The head of the Saudi National Security Assessment Project said the barrier was needed because of the dire lack of Iraqi border patrol. Saudi leaders said that most militants traveling to Iraq go through Syria, but the new measure would primarily address the fear of an Iraqi civil war spilling into the Kingdom.[413]

At the policy level, Saudi Arabia again announced that the Kingdom opposed any official separation of Iraq into autonomous regions. The announcement came shortly after the Iraqi parliament passed a bill allowing provinces to vote to create autonomous regions in 2008. The Saudis expressed support for Sunni legislators who had boycotted the vote, along with members of al-Sadr's Shi'ite party and secular parties, in opposition to separation. The vote sharpened Saudi concerns about a Shi'a-dominated Iraq with ties to Iran.[414]

11

The Dynamics of the Insurgency and Civil Conflict in 2007—The ''Surge,'' the ''Battle for Baghdad,'' the ''Tribal Awakening,'' and Political Accommodation

January 10, 2007 President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki announce a "New Way Forward" in Iraq. The new strategy includes sending some 20,000 additional U.S. troops to Iraq, the majority of which will be "surged" to Baghdad. Soon after, Gen. David H. Petraeus takes command of Multi-National Forces–Iraq from Gen. George W. Casey, Jr.; Adm. William J. Fallon takes command of CENTCOM, replacing Gen. John P. Abizaid; and Ryan C. Crocker becomes the new U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, replacing Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad.

January 22, 2007 At least 88 people are killed and 170 are wounded when two car bombs explode simultaneously at a second-hand goods market in Bab al-Sharji, a busy commercial area in central Baghdad.

February 13, 2007 The new strategy gets under way in Baghdad, although the full U.S. "surge" strength does not arrive until June.

February 21, 2007 British Prime Minister Tony Blair announces that 3,000 British troops will be withdrawn from Iraq in the following months. Responsibility for security in Basra and much of the south will be transferred to Iraqi security forces.

March 13, 2007 MNC-Iraq Commander Gen. Raymond T. Odierno sends several hundred additional troops to Baquba, Diyala

Province, to help thwart growing violence in the "Baghdad belt" as insurgents seek to escape the surge troops in Baghdad.

March 16, 2007 Two suicide bombings involving toxic chlorine gas make 350 people ill in Fallujah, and another smaller bomb attack near Ramadi also releases chlorine gas. Chlorine bombing attacks also occur on April 30 and May 15.

April 14, 2007 A suicide car bomber kills at least 43 people and wounds 200 more at a bus station near a Shi'ite shrine in the holy city of Karbala.

April 18, 2007 A car bomb in Baghdad's mainly Shi'ite district of Sadriya kills 90 people and wounds 110.

May 24, 2007 Moqtada al-Sadr returns to Iraq after a four-month hiatus in Iran. The U.S. Congress approves the budget for U.S. troops in Iraq without a timetable for withdrawal after several months of intense debate.

May 25, 2007 Iraqi special forces kill the leader of Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia in Basra.

May 29, 2007 At least 23 people are killed and 68 others are wounded when a powerful bomb in a parked bus explodes in central Baghdad. At least 18 people are killed and 41 are wounded when a car bomb explodes in a busy market of a mainly Shi'ite neighborhood in southwestern Baghdad.

May 31, 2007 A suicide bomber kills 20 people and wounds 20 others when he blows himself up next to a police recruitment center in Fallujah. Attacks against Iraqi security forces are on the rise in May.

June 10, 2007 A suicide truck bomb kills 14 policemen and wounds 42 more at a police station near Tikrit.

June 11, 2007 A suicide car bomber blows up a major bridge over the Diyala River. Bridge bombings become increasingly common during this time.

June 13, 2007 Suspected al-Qa'ida insurgents blow up the two minarets of the Askariya mosque in Samarra, destroying what was left after the initial bombing on February 22, 2006. Curfews are imposed in Samarra and Baghdad.

June 16, 2007 Operation Marne Torch commences in the Arab Jabour and Salman Pak areas, southeast of Baghdad. The operation aims at cutting off access routes to Baghdad and eliminating and capturing insurgents.

June 19, 2007 The United States launches Operation Phantom Thunder, an offensive operation across Iraq. Ten thousand U.S. troops are deployed to Diyala, launching Operation Arrowhead Ripper,

	a subset of Phantom Thunder. The operation is aimed at killing and capturing al-Qa'ida operatives that have fled Baghdad and Anbar in the previous months.
June 19, 2007	A truck bomb kills 87 people and wounds 214 near the Shi'ite Khilani mosque in central Baghdad.
July 7, 2007	A truck bomb kills 150 people and wounds 250 at an outdoor market in the northern town of Tuz Khurmato, south of Kirkuk.
August 30, 2007	Moqtada al-Sadr announces a freeze on all Mahdi Army operations.
September 14, 2007	President Bush announces the administration's intention to withdraw U.S. surge troops by July 2008, leaving 130,000 U.S. military personnel in Iraq.

A January 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq was anything but optimistic about these complex patterns of violence in Iraq. It warned that unless current conditions were reversed in the following 12–18 months, the security situation would continue to deteriorate at the same rapid rate as at the end of 2006. It concluded that "the term 'civil war' accurately described key elements of the Iraqi conflict." It added, however, that the term civil war "does not accurately describe the complexity of the conflict in Iraq," indicating that the conflict involved more actors and struggles than that term suggested.[1]

The January NIE summarized the complex challenges facing Iraq as follows:[2]

- Decades of subordination to Sunni political, social, and economic domination have made the Shi'a deeply insecure about their hold on power. This insecurity leads the Shi'a to mistrust US efforts to reconcile Iraqi sects and reinforces their unwillingness to engage with the Sunnis on a variety of issues, including adjusting the structure of Iraq's federal system, reining in Shi'a militias, and easing de-Ba'athification.
- Many Sunni Arabs remain unwilling to accept their minority status, believe the central government is illegitimate and incompetent, and are convinced that Shi'a dominance will increase Iranian influence over Iraq, in ways that erode the state's Arab character and increase Sunni repression.
- The absence of unifying leaders among the Arab Sunni or Shi'a with the capacity to speak for or exert control over their confessional groups limits prospects for reconciliation. The Kurds remain willing to participate in Iraqi state building but reluctant to surrender any of the gains in autonomy they have achieved.
- The Kurds are moving systematically to increase their control of Kirkuk to guarantee annexation of all or most of the city and province into the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) after the constitutionally mandated referendum scheduled to occur no later than 31 December 2007. Arab groups in Kirkuk continue to resist violently what they see as Kurdish encroachment.
- Despite real improvements, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)—particularly the Iraqi police—will be hard pressed in the next 12–18 months to execute significantly

increased security responsibilities, and particularly to operate independently against Shi'a militias with success. Sectarian divisions erode the dependability of many units, many are hampered by personnel and equipment shortfalls, and a number of Iraqi units have refused to serve outside of the areas where they were recruited.

- Extremists—most notably the Sunni jihadist group al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) and Shi'a oppositionist Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM)—continue to act as very effective accelerators for what has become a self-sustaining inter-sectarian struggle between Shi'a and Sunnis.
- Significant population displacement, both within Iraq and the movement of Iraqis into neighboring countries, indicates the hardening of ethno-sectarian divisions, diminishes Iraq's professional and entrepreneurial classes, and strains the capacities of the countries to which they have relocated. The UN estimates over a million Iraqis are now in Syria and Jordan.

Most of these judgments were correct at the time. Nevertheless, many key aspects of insurgent activity and civil conflict in Iraq did change sharply during the course of 2007. These changes were driven by several key factors:

- First, the United States and the Iraqi government made major changes in their strategy and tactics. The United States reinforced its forces and committed them to forward operations and a "win and hold" strategy centered on Baghdad.
- Second, al-Qa'ida's extremism created a Sunni tribal revolt or "awakening" in Anbar that turned much of the population from support of the Sunni insurgency to armed opposition, and from attacks on U.S. forces to cooperation with them.
- Third, these improvements in the security situation were not matched by progress in political cooperation and accommodation. While negotiations took place, sectarian and ethnic cleansing continued. In fact, elements of the Shi'ite-dominated government and the Iraqi security forces took advantage of U.S. military successes against al-Qa'ida and other Sunni insurgents to step up their support or "tolerance" of Shi'ite ethnic cleansing.
- Fourth, Kurdish efforts to establish an autonomous or federal area were put on hold by delaying any vote on the issue.
- Fifth, the Shi'ite south was the scene of increasing power struggles between the major Shi'ite parties, particularly the Sadr organization and militia, the Fadillah Party, and the Supreme Islamic Council in Iraq (SICC). At the same time Iranian influence and activism increased, and Britain cut its role in Iraq.

The first three of these patterns are discussed in this chapter. The other two, which represent more continuity than change, are discussed in the following chapter. In broad terms, all five were affected by one key problem: There could be no military answer to Iraq's security, stability, and development. These could be achieved only through Iraqi political conciliation and accommodation. The events of 2007, both positive and negative, made this lesson even clearer. The future—uncertain as it remained—now depended on Iraq politics and leadership far more than it did on American military action and intervention.

CHANGING U.S. AND IRAQI MILITARY STRATEGY AND TACTICS

The steady deterioration in Iraqi security and stability during 2006 forced major changes in U.S. strategy and tactics in early 2007. President Bush announced a new U.S. strategy on January 10, 2007.[3] He called for major changes in the military effort, a major new Iraqi effort at political accommodation and reconciliation, and new Iraqi and U.S. efforts at economic development and reconstruction.

President Bush summarized the military focus of the new U.S. strategy as follows, while making it clear that both its success and U.S. support for Iraq depended on progress in Iraqi political accommodation:

> The most urgent priority of success in Iraq is security, especially in Baghdad. Eighty percent of Iraq's sectarian violence occurs within 30 miles of the capital. This violence is splitting Baghdad into sectarian enclaves, and shaking the confidence of all Iraqis. Only Iraqis can end the sectarian violence and secure their people. And the government has put forward an aggressive plan to do it...
>
> Now let me explain the elements of this effort: The Iraqi government will appoint a military commander and two deputy commanders for their capital. The Iraqi government will deploy Iraqi Army and National Police brigades across Baghdad's nine districts. When these forces are fully deployed, there will be 18 Iraqi Army and National Police brigades committed to this effort, along with local police. These Iraqi forces will operate from local police stations—conducting patrols and setting up checkpoints, and going door to door to gain the trust of Baghdad residents...
>
> This is a strong commitment. But for it to succeed, our commanders say the Iraqis will need our help. So America will change our strategy to help the Iraqis carry out their campaign to put down sectarian violence and bring security to the people of Baghdad. This will require increasing American force levels. So I've committed more than 20,000 additional American troops to Iraq. The vast majority of them—five brigades—will be deployed to Baghdad. These troops will work alongside Iraqi units and be embedded in their formations. Our troops will have a well-defined mission: to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs...
>
> Many tonight will ask why this effort will succeed when previous operations to secure Baghdad did not. Well, here are the differences: In earlier operations, Iraqi and American forces cleared many neighborhoods of terrorists and insurgents, but when our forces moved on to other targets, the killers returned. This time, we'll have the right force levels we need to hold the areas that have been cleared. In earlier operations, political and sectarian interference prevented Iraqi and American troops from going into neighborhoods that are home to those fueling the sectarian violence. This time, Iraqi and American forces will have the green light to enter those neighborhoods—and Prime Minister Maliki has pledged that political or sectarian interference will not be tolerated...
>
> I've made it clear to the Prime Minister that America's commitment is not open-ended. If the Iraqi government does not follow through on its promises, it will lose the support of the American people—and it will lose the support of the Iraqi people. Now is the time to act.[4]

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates added more details at a press conference the following day:

> The term "surge" has been used in relation to increasing US troop levels, and an increase certainly will take place. But what is really going on and what is going to take place is a surge across all lines of operations: military and nonmilitary, Iraqi and coalition. The president's plan has Iraqis in the lead and seeks a better balance of US military and nonmilitary efforts than was the case in the past. We cannot succeed in Iraq without the important nonmilitary elements Secretary Rice just mentioned.
>
> The increase in military forces will be phased in. It will not unfold overnight. There will be no D-Day. It won't look like the Gulf War. The timetable for the introduction of additional US forces will provide ample opportunity early on and before many of the additional US troops actually arrive in Iraq to evaluate the progress of this endeavor and whether the Iraqis are fulfilling their commitments to us.
>
> This updated plan builds on the lessons and experiences of the past. It places new emphasis on and adds new resources to the holding and building part of the clear, hold and build strategy.

When asked how the United States and Iraq would combine the Baghdad buildup with fighting militias and sectarian violence outside of the capital, outgoing U.S. commander Gen. George Casey, said, "The Baghdad plan itself is integrated into a holistic countrywide plan that the multinational corps is developing. And security for Baghdad won't just come from securing the inside of Baghdad. It comes from the support zones around the outsides, as far away as you suggest—Baquba and Ramadi and Fallujah. It goes all the way out to the borders to stop the flow of foreign fighters and support coming."[5]

The Planned Rise in U.S. and Iraqi Forces

The planned "surge" in U.S. forces called for 5 additional combat brigades to support the existing 15 already deployed. This was designed to give commanders the 20 combat brigades that the Pentagon said were necessary to secure Baghdad and the western Anbar Province.[6] It called for placing 41,000 U.S. troops in the capital, including the 15,000 already operating in the greater Baghdad area at the start of 2007. There were 22,000 Iraqi Army forces operating in Baghdad at the time of Bush's speech. The new Iraqi deployment was to add 8,000, bringing the Iraqi total, including National Police, to around 50,000.

The president stated that he would send an additional 17,500 U.S. troops to Baghdad (raising the total to at least 32,500) and 4,000 more to Anbar Province. His strategy also called for new tactics that would take the fight directly to Iraq's Sunni insurgents and hostile Shi'ite militias, where U.S. and Iraqi forces would deploy forward and win and hold their gains rather than "win and leave." This meant shifting from a U.S. focus on creating and training Iraqi security forces to a focus on taking the fight directly to the enemy.

Uncertain Iraqi and U.S. Agreement

Although the Iraqi government formally endorsed the new strategy, and indeed claimed it as its own, it soon became clear that the United States and the Iraqi government had differences over how such a strategy should be implemented. Only days after President Bush announced the new strategy, American officials in Baghdad reported disagreements with Iraqi officials. The primary concern of U.S. officials was that the Iraqi government would fail to follow through on its vow to attack Shi'ite militias. One official said, "We are implementing a strategy to embolden a government that is actually part of the problem. We are being played like a pawn."[7]

There was also disagreement between the United States and Iraq over the appointment of the Iraqi operational commander for the Baghdad offensive. Al-Maliki selected Lt. Gen. Abboud Qanbar—a Shi'ite from southern Iraq and unknown by most American commanders—despite opposition by the U.S. military. The U.S. military did not support al-Maliki's first choice for the job, Lt. Gen. Mohan al-Freiji.[8] Qanbar would be partnered with the commander of the U.S. 1st Calvary Division, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr. Similar partnerships would continue down the chain of command, another issue troubling U.S. officials.[9]

Command and Control Issues

Command and control presented additional problems. Many of the official statements from the United States and the Iraqi government indicated that Prime Minister al-Maliki would have control over shaping and executing the new strategy. American officials, however, said that the superior authority was a council composed of al-Maliki, the ministers of Defense and Interior, the Iraqi national security advisor, and the top U.S. commander in Iraq.[10]

In practice, the United States continued to plan and execute almost all top-level command and operational control, subject to Iraqi government review and vetoes —some of which had a clear pro-Shi'ite sectarian bias.

When asked if he understood the command and control relationships between U.S. and Iraqi forces in the Baghdad security plan, incoming Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I) commander Gen. David H. Petraeus said,

> This is an exceedingly important issue. Getting the relationship between our forces and the Iraqi security forces right is critical to operating together. At its simplest, US commanders will command and retain operational control of US forces; Iraqi commanders will command Iraqi forces and exercise operational control over them once transitioned from the tactical control of US forces (this has taken place for the 6th Division and in the case of many other Iraqi units in recent months). If confirmed, I intend to ensure that there is very close cooperation between US and Iraq headquarters to ensure unity of effort, careful coordination of operations, and clear knowledge of what each force is doing. Of necessity, this will include Iraqi and US Special Operations Forces and Police Forces as well. As I understand it, the Baghdad plan is to be an Iraqi Plan, devised by the Iraqis in consultation with, and supported by, MNF-I and MNC-I

[Multi-National Corps-Iraq], and US Forces, under the command of US commanders, will act in support of the Iraqi effort to establish security in Baghdad.[11]

OPERATION FARDH AL-QANOON (ENFORCING THE LAW)

The initial phase of the surge strategy, which the United States called the Baghdad security plan, and the Iraqi government called Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon (Enforcing the Law), took place from January 15 to June 15, 2007. The operation deployed U.S. and Iraqi forces to clear neighborhoods of insurgents and militias and to hold them by maintaining a presence in those areas.

Prime Minister al-Maliki formally launched the Iraqi government's start of the security operation in Baghdad on February 13, 2007, and President Bush formally launched the U.S. effort the same day.[12] U.S. and Iraqi forces set up dozens of new security checkpoints, and the border crossing with Syria and Iran remained closed. Gen. Abboud Qanbar also said that Iraqis living in occupied homes of displaced families had 15 days to return the property to the original owner. He stated that he had control of Defense Ministry and Interior Ministry forces under the command structure of Fardh al-Qanoon.[13]

Initial Problems and Successes

Delays and teething problems gave the insurgents opportunities to strike before the surge could gain strength and effectiveness. Some Iraqis blamed the United States for cracking down on the Mahdi Army before the first additional U.S. troops arrived, leaving a security vacuum that allowed insurgents to explode a truck in a Shi'ite market, killing 135 and wounding 300 more.[14] The total number of attacks per day in January averaged 180, equal to the previous high of October 2006.[15]

From the start, the new operations in the Baghdad area presented sectarian problems. Shi'ites said that the surge was targeting Shi'ite armed groups and sought to give Sunni insurgents more power, and Sunnis argued that their neighborhoods were being unfairly targeted.

Despite assurances by Prime Minister al-Maliki that politicians would not interfere with security operations, a member of parliament from the SIIC—Jalal al-Din al-Saghir—suspended Friday prayer services to protest a U.S./Iraqi raid on the Barantha mosque in Baghdad, at which he was the imam. He said that the raid was conducted solely by U.S. forces and that the Iraqi government had not been informed. A U.S. military statement said that Iraqi forces raided the mosque because they suspected it was "used as a place to conduct sectarian violence against Iraqi civilians as well as a safe haven and weapons storage area for illegal militia groups." The joint forces found three heavy machine guns and 80 assault rifles.[16]

A raid on Sunni politician Dhafir al-Ani's home in March also found a large cache of weapons, including Kalashnikovs, a sniper rifle, and four cars with traces of explosives. Al-Ani—a more conservative member of the Iraqi Consensus Front—said that

the raid was politically motivated and that his guards had been tortured by Iraqi security forces.[17]

Yet, complaints were matched by reports of early successes. On February 17, 2007, the spokesman for the Iraqi general in charge of the new Baghdad security plan claimed violence in the capital had decreased by 80 percent since the offensive began. Brig. Qassim Moussawi said 4 militants had been killed and 144 had been captured in the past three days. He said 130 displaced families had returned home. The following day, he said that 327 displaced families had returned to their homes.[18] Prime Minister al-Maliki also said that the first few days of the plan were a "dazzling success." He also told President Bush that Iraqi officials would be "firm in dealing with any side that breaks the law."[19]

Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell claimed after the first week, "There has been a significant reduction in sectarian incidents and in extrajudicial killings in Baghdad because the Iraqi people have chosen restraint rather than retribution." He did, however, continue to caution against being too optimistic:

> While this is in fact very encouraging, we cannot stress strongly enough that it would be premature to declare Fard al-Qanun a success. Success will require a sustained effort and a comprehensive approach that complements progress and security with political, economic, legal, and social initiatives. The effects of the operation will not be seen in days or weeks, but over the course of months. We do not expect to eliminate all violence in Iraq. The Multinational Force Iraq's objective is to help the Iraqi security force reduce the violence enough to give the Iraqi people and their government an opportunity to reach political solutions to Iraq's problems. This effort will be extremely challenging, but it is one that is doable.[20]

U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Christopher Garver said that there was a relative decline in sectarian kidnappings and murders. The Associated Press reported that the average number of bodies brought to the morgue per day dropped from 50–60 to 10.[21] The U.S. military said in a report that improvised explosive devices (IED) attacks dropped 20 percent and sectarian murders dropped to the lowest point in a year after the first several weeks of the new security plan.

Caldwell stated a month after the start of the surge that sectarian assassinations were down roughly 50 percent. The number of car bombs in the capital, however, rose to their highest point in the war during the same period.[22] The last of three committed Iraqi Army brigades had arrived in the capital. The first two, however, were at 60–65-percent strength, but the last was at 90–100-percent strength.[23]

Other types of insurgent attacks, such as suicide bombings, did rise between February 14 and the first week of March.[24] A bombing on February 26 inside the Iraqi Ministry of Public Works wounded Shi'ite Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi. And an attack at the largely Shi'ite Mustansiriya University in Baghdad by a female suicide bomber killed 40 students and wounded 55. Shi'ites contended that the increase in car bombings resulted from the security vacuum after Moqtada al-Sadr stood down the Mahdi Army and U.S./Iraqi forces could not fill the void.

In his first press briefing as the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq on March 8, 2007, Gen. David H. Petraeus urged patience in judging the success of the president's security plan and said that the political and economic solutions took longer to implement. He stated, "There is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq, to the insurgency." He also indicated that progress would not be achieved unless the individuals creating the insecurity were brought into political discussions.[25]

Putting the Surge in Place

Key elements of the new operation took time to put in place. The joint Iraq/U.S. command center for the security crackdown in the Green Zone was staffed by February 6, 2007, but not yet "up and running." In addition, Iraqi and U.S. military officials said that the structure of the Iraqi chain of command in the security initiative had not yet been resolved.[26]

Local commanders in Baghdad estimated that only 2,000 Iraqi troops had arrived by early February. Iraqi officials said that they had a total of 22,000 Iraqi Army troops in the capital and 20,000 national and local police forces. U.S. officials estimated that roughly one-third of these Iraqi troops were missing at any one time, and the effectiveness of the remaining troops was limited at best.[27]

By mid-February, however, the Commanding General in Baghdad, Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil, Jr., reported that there were 13,000 Iraqi Army soldiers, 20,000 National Policemen, 41,000 local police, and more than 35,000 U.S. troops in Baghdad.[28] Commander of MNF Security Transition Command–Iraq Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey indicated that four Iraqi Army brigades were in Baghdad by February 14.[29]

One of the units from Sulaimaniyah and composed of Kurdish troops was only at 56-percent strength, but the other three brigades had 70–75 percent of their soldiers. Dempsey said that this was a success because up to 25 percent of the brigades were on authorized leave, and 10 percent had stayed at their home base. Of the unit from Sulaimaniyah, the 17 percent of soldiers who chose not to deploy would be dismissed from the Iraqi Army.[30] Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 28, 2007, that the battalions that comprised the brigades arrived at 43–82 percent of their full strength.

Kurdish troops made up two of the army brigades sent to Baghdad. Some Kurdish leaders initially feared that this would lead to ethnic tension. Mahmoud Othman, a member of the Iraqi Kurdish Coalition said, "There are fears that a fight like this, pitting Kurds against the Arabs, is bound to add an ethnic touch to the conflict. I am against the move. . .and there are many in the Iraqi parliament who are against it too." Critics of the Kurdish forces also said that they would fight for the Kurdistan Regional Government, not Iraq as a whole.[31]

In practice, however, Kurdish forces showed far more discipline than the Iraqi Army's mixed, Shi'ite-led units and were far less prone to take a side in sectarian cleansing.[32] General Petraeus said the following about the use of Kurdish units:

> I have confidence in the expected performance of these units, though there are likely to be challenges due to language issues (few of their enlisted soldiers speak Arabic) and,

possibly, due to operation away from predominantly Kurdish areas for the first time (though some of the battalions did serve in mixed-ethnic areas in the vicinity of Mosul). In considering other factors, there has been little in the way of corruption or other sectarian issues reported in these units. Additionally, because of their combat experience and predominantly Kurdish soldiers, there tends to be a higher level of cohesion in these formations. Because of their home locations, there is a lower likelihood these units will have issues with infiltration by anti-government entities. Finally, commanders involved in training these units, as well as their Coalition advisors, assess that they are unlikely to be biased when conducting operations in the locations to which they are being assigned.[33]

U.S. forces also took time to deploy. MNF-I spokesman Major General Caldwell stated in mid-February that the first of five additional U.S. brigades had arrived in Baghdad.[34] Caldwell also reiterated the need to be patient and give the new strategy time to succeed:

First, it will take time for all the additional troops being deployed to arrive and begin operations. Additional Iraqi and American troops comprising the "surge" will not be completely in place until late May.

Second, the non-kinetic efforts will take time to produce effects on the streets in Baghdad. The government of Iraq's economic development program, for example, places greater emphasis on long-term job creation, rather than make-work programs.

Finally, most of Iraq's problems are systemic and will not be turned around immediately because of the new security plan. The key to solving Iraq's problems, whether military, economic or political, is leadership—Iraqi leadership to be precise. . . .

Similarly, Iraqi security forces have improved since last year. Iraqi forces continue to gain in confidence and capability, and understand that they need to work to gain the trust of all Iraqis' ethnic and sectarian communities. Yet Iraqi forces still suffer from deficiencies in leadership, logistics, intelligence, and, in some cases, loyalty. It will take more than two months to solve these problems.[35]

It soon became clear that the exact size and composition of U.S. forces had to be shaped by the course of events and by operational needs that changed and evolved as the operation proceeded. In early March, the Pentagon approved the addition of 2,200 military police to help handle the increased number of detainees.[36] On March 16 the U.S. Army announced that an aviation brigade of 2,600 would deploy to Iraq 45 days early, in May.[37] The president also authorized a total of 2,400 support troops for the surge, bringing the total number of troops to 28,700.[38]

Moving into Hostile Areas

The first large-scale security operation by U.S. and Iraqi forces was a move by 2,500 U.S. soldiers—with 400–500 Iraqi forces—into the Shi'ite neighborhoods of Shaab, Bayda, and Ur. The troops met little resistance as they entered the area. Residents said that Mahdi Army fighters had gone underground or fled the neighborhood in the previous week.[39] This may have been the result of the fact that Iraqi

police forces took the lead and entered Iraqi homes, searching for weapons in what was intended to help strengthen trust in Iraqi security forces among the population. After the search operation, however, an interpreter told the U.S. military that at least some of the Iraqi officers had warned residents to hide their weapons before the U.S. troops entered their homes. The incident underscored the sectarianism of the police and the inability of Iraqi forces to take over security operations.[40]

U.S. and Iraqi forces conducted the first security sweep of Sadr City in March, as the new Baghdad security plan broadened in scope. The U.S. military said that construction of a Joint Security Station (JSS) in Sadr City would begin shortly. It said that the first raid was limited in its scope and included more Iraqi security forces than U.S. troops. The forces searched homes in only a small section of the suburb and residents said they were polite and not hostile. The military did not take any suspects and did not confiscate any weapons. The troops met no resistance from Mahdi militiamen, although a Sadr aide did state that al-Sadr had not approved the raid or the creation of a JSS.[41]

Other reports, however, offered a different assessment of the first U.S. raids in Sadr City. The raids were meant to be conducted by both U.S. forces and Iraqi police forces and to help ensure that Shi'ite residents did not feel threatened. The Iraqi units, however, showed up hours late for the raid, and operations were further delayed by negotiations over how to conduct the operation. For example, it took several hours to determine which U.S. and Iraqi forces would travel in Humvees and which would walk. It also took some time to determine which troops would enter houses first and the overall role that the U.S. forces would play.[42] The common theme in all reporting on Sadr City operations, however, was that U.S. forces proceeded without showy displays of force and did not seek to provoke the Shi'ite civilians.

U.S. clearing operations also began in the dangerous Sunni neighborhoods of Amiriyah and Ghazaliyah in western Baghdad. During the first day of raids, U.S. and Iraqi forces detained 31 people and found two weapons caches, nitric acid, and chlorine—which had recently been used by insurgents in several suicide bombings that poisoned hundreds.[43]

Some clearing operations took longer than expected. In Mansour, for instance, an operation that was originally intended to last two weeks was extended to five weeks. Military officials claimed that the intelligence available justified a more thorough search of the area. It took the military longer to control some districts in western Baghdad, such as al-Rasheed and Amiriyah, because of the presence of insurgents.

The overall operation experienced more serious delays. When the U.S. military began planning for the operation in Baghdad in late 2006, some estimated that such operations would be able to "clear" every neighborhood in the capital by the end of July. However, these deadlines had to slip substantially. Some of the new brigades were diverted to volatile regions surrounding Baghdad, including Diyala Province. More than one of the U.S. Army's Stryker battalions planned for Baghdad were sent to Diyala.

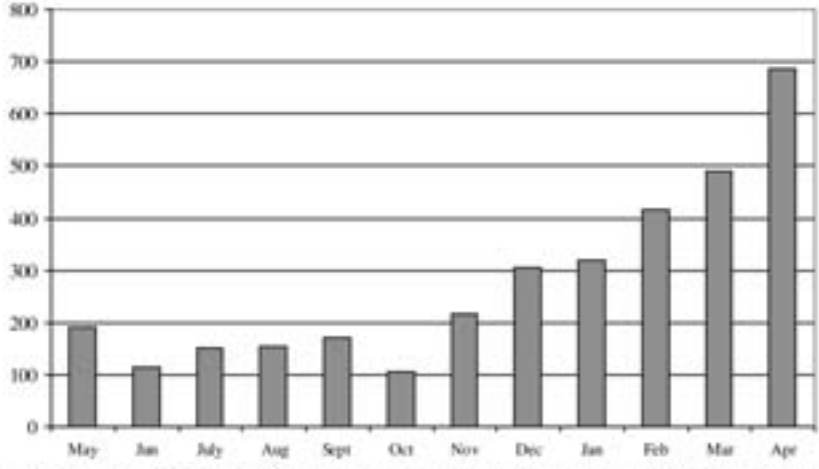
These clearing operations did, however, allow troops to find a growing number of weapons caches from the start. In the first seven weeks of the security plan, beginning

on February 14, 2007, troops found an average of 36 stockpiles per week, compared with 24 the previous seven weeks. They continued to have significant successes.

As Figure 11.1 shows, U.S. and Iraqi forces found a growing number of weapons caches. For example, on April 9, 2007, U.S. and Iraqi troops deploying from the Joint Security Station in Jihad found a car with numerous weapons suspected of being smuggled from Iran. The weapons included 60-millimeter mortar rounds, 81-millimeter mortar rounds, RPG-7 rounds, and a 107-millimeter rocket.[44]

The Baghdad security plan included both crowded urban areas in the center of the city and surrounding outskirts, particularly on the Sunni-dominated northern edge. For example, in mid-February soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division entered the village of Ibrahim Bin Ali with the goal of capturing insurgents—believed to be aligned with al-Qa'ida—and record data on all fighting-age males. The soldiers did not capture any insurgents; instead they talked with local residents and began a slow process of gathering intelligence and gaining their trust. The operation, however, did not include any Iraqi soldiers because they did not return calls from the U.S. commander asking for their assistance.[45]

Iraqi security forces had mixed performance, although many units improved over time. Most Iraqi battalions came to Baghdad without their full manpower. In addition, their effectiveness was compromised by a program that rotated units out of Baghdad and back to their home regions every 90 days. Brig. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, deputy commander of the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad, said that Iraqi security forces failed to secure areas that had previously been cleared by U.S. forces. The Iraqi Army and police units, according to General Brooks, were unprepared to



Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress, June 2007, p. 20, available at: www.defenselink.mil.

*Note: Data points estimates from above-mentioned chart.

Figure 11.1 Number of Weapons Caches Found, May 2006–April 2007

man checkpoints and handle security operations. In these instances, American troops were forced to conduct operations in areas that had previously been cleared, yet had been infiltrated again by insurgents.

An offensive to clear Haifa Street had to be led by U.S. forces with little initial Iraqi support. U.S. forces on Haifa Street had mixed experiences with the ISF and found that the Iraqi Army units intended for joint patrols never showed up, especially for early morning operations.[46]

The *New York Times* reported that when Iraqi troops did show up for the operation on Haifa Street, they did not seem to take the job seriously. ISF units searched only half the apartments that they were supposed to search and did not take any regard for personal items of the residents. The U.S. troops on Haifa Street said that the main goal was to let Iraqi forces take the lead—which they were already nominally doing—but in doing so the troops could lose control of the area they worked so hard to gain.[47] U.S. military spokesman Maj. Steven L. Lamb said that by mid-February, the Haifa Street area was secure and in the hands of Iraqi forces.[48]

At the same time, other aspects of ISF operations went better than expected. The majority of the Iraqi Army troops were Kurds from northern Iraq. U.S. troops said that the Kurds never turned down a mission in Baghdad, which was often a problem with Iraqi police forces. Citizens also said that Kurdish-Arab animosities did not seem to inhibit the Kurdish troops' ability to conduct patrols. U.S. troops felt that the Kurdish troops' ambivalence toward Sunni–Shi'a animosity helped their credibility among the sectarian population in Baghdad. Iraqi Army units continued to operate with close oversight by U.S. forces, however, and they did voice their distrust of Arab Army units.[49]

The White House report on Iraqi progress in this area in September 2007 put a favorable spin on just how far Iraqi forces had come, but was generally accurate in reporting the following:

> The Ministry of Defense has generated a total of eight Iraqi Army Brigade Headquarters and 27 Iraqi Army Battalions to support Baghdad operations. These units are actively involved in joint and independent operations throughout Baghdad and the Baghdad belts. The Government of Iraq provided the number of units required, and they were trained to the proper individual and collective baseline.
>
> As unit manning and composition issues were identified, the Government of Iraq addressed them. For example, in order to compensate for the number of soldiers absent during Operation Fardh Al Qanoon for leave or other reasons, the Government of Iraq expanded combat unit manning to 120 percent of authorization, thus achieving higher present for duty strength. Current present for duty rates are now 75 percent of authorized strength, which is within Iraqi Army standard.
>
> Some of these units have performed exceptionally well, voluntarily extending their deployments up to 270 days and raising their operational readiness ratings. Over the past 2 months the units serving with Coalition forces in the Baghdad Area of Operations—the 6th and 9th Iraqi Army Divisions—have conducted almost 400 combined operations, 700 independent operations, and more than 7,000 independent patrols. Some

units have been less impressive, suffering from a variety of issues related to a lack of leadership and equipment to support their assigned missions.

. . . Iraqi Security forces are not yet able to assume responsibility for security throughout the country. Placing that burden on the Iraqis before they are ready risks sacrificing the gains we have made. The ISF will require additional training, equipping, and logistical support.[50]

Joint Security Stations

Much of the new strategy depended on efforts to create between 30 and 40 Joint Security Stations. These JSSs were to be manned by both Iraqi and U.S. troops and would be located in neighborhoods throughout the capital. Ten of the planned JSSs were operational by February 8, 2007,[51] and 19 were manned by March 20, 2007. There were also plans to create several dozen combat outposts—posts manned by only U.S. forces.[52]

Capt. Erik Peterson established one JSS in Ghazaliyah, one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Baghdad because it was a mixed area and the focal point of sectarian cleansings campaigns. It was once predominately Sunni, but in the latter half of 2006 the Shi'ite population steadily grew and by 2007 it was almost equally divided. Further, the population of 7,000 was cut off from many local services and received on average one hour of electricity per day.

Peterson said that he established the combat outpost at one of the fault lines in the neighborhood so that he could interact with residents from all sects equally. U.S. commanders in Baghdad were optimistic that the stations would give them more legitimacy with Iraqis because they were no longer returned to distant bases at night. They also acknowledged that the Iraqi security forces had not been prepared to deal with the sectarian violence, although the U.S. military had continued to hand over control throughout 2006.[53]

Another such combat outpost was established in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Amel. U.S. forces moved into an abandoned gym in the once mixed neighborhood that was increasingly turning Shi'ite. The few remaining Sunnis said that they were scared to leave their houses, but welcomed the U.S. troops.[54]

By September, the White House reported that the U.S. and Iraqi forces had made the following progress:

Nearly all of the planned joint security stations, Coalition outposts, and other patrol bases have been established across Baghdad and the surrounding area. As of August 31, 2007, 30 of 33 planned joint security stations were operational and 31 Coalition combat outposts had achieved operational capability. Joint security stations provide an around-the-clock security presence in most of Baghdad and are particularly effective as they merge Coalition partnering with Iraqi presence and action. There are numerous examples where Iraqi presence has facilitated a lower application of force and a more positive result. Other stations are being established in outlying areas where interaction with the local people can have a direct impact on the reduction of violence within the city. This increased interaction with the local population should continue to suppress crime and

sectarian violence as well as provide valuable intelligence to support economic growth, political accommodation, and counterinsurgency operations.

Joint security stations are also being successfully employed in al-Anbar province and numerous other locations across Iraq. Coalition leaders will continue to consult with the Baghdad Operational Center and national leadership to determine additional emplacements.[55]

Problems in Sunni Baghdad

Security in Sunni areas of Baghdad—which Shi'ite sectarian cleansing had pushed toward the western side of the Tigris River—did not improve as quickly as in Shi'ite neighborhoods. Sectarian cleansing had had a major impact before the surge began. Some estimates suggested that Sunnis now made up only 40 percent of Baghdad's population in the spring of 2007, when once they had been the majority.[56]

Residents in many Sunni areas now faced continuing pressure from groups like the Sadr Militia to leave their homes, and their security sometimes actually declined as the surge attacked the Sunni insurgents that had provided some degree of protection. In some threatened neighborhoods, Sunni residents rarely left their homes.

Reconstruction projects were improving water quality and electricity in Shi'ite Sadr City—funded in part by the Iraqi government and in part by al-Sadr's organization—and the markets there were generally busy. In contrast, markets and streets in threatened Sunni neighborhoods remained empty, and people lacked basic services —leaving them to feel generally deserted by the government. Government workers said they could not enter the Sunni neighborhoods because they would be killed.

Ahmed Chalabi, who had recently been charged with working to win popular support for the Baghdad security plan, said he saw four main problems in Sunni areas: food distribution, electricity, fuel, and health services. He said he was working to solve the first problem by having Iraqi Army units accompany food agents when traveling to Sunni areas. He admitted, however, that the other problems were deeper and would require much more time to solve.[57]

While most sectarian cleansing came through threats and extortion, and did not lead to open fighting or outright killings, security remained uncertain in a number of Sunni areas through the spring of 2007. One example was the Fadhil neighborhood. Like many once prosperous Sunni areas, Fadhil had become a no-go zone for Shi'ites, reporters, and aide workers and was following a downward spiral with much of Sunni Baghdad.[58] Fighting erupted between Sunni militants and residents and Iraqi–U.S. forces in Fadhil on April 10, 2007.[59] The residents had set up a neighborhood watch group in 2006, but Sunni insurgents had entered the neighborhood to use it as a base against the surrounding Shi'ite areas; the watch group eventually merged with the insurgents.

Iraqi Army troops were conducting operations against Sunni forces at a mosque, where residents said that they killed two men, sparking attacks from the largely Sunni population of Fadhil, which is located in Shi'ite-dominated eastern Baghdad. Reports of the casualties varied widely. Residents said that up to 36 people in Fadhil

had been killed and that they had destroyed five Iraqi Humvees. The U.S. military said that a total of seven people were killed—three insurgents and four Iraqi soldiers, and 16 U.S. soldiers were wounded.

Securing Key Sections of the City: ''Gated Communities''

Securing an entire city of 5 million to 7.5 million people was impossible. Baghdad was too important to the Iraqi economy to search every vehicle or control every access point, and the same applied to internal traffic. The city could function only with relatively constant flows of traffic between Sunni, Shi'ite, and mixed areas. As a result, the operation had to find ways to secure individual neighborhoods.

The U.S. military announced on April 22, 2007, that it would seek to secure at least ten neighborhoods in Baghdad by creating "gated communities." The first areas to be walled off were the Sunni neighborhoods of Ameriyia, Khadra, and Adhamiyah. The U.S. military also planned to take a census of the areas, recording residents' fingerprints and possibly issuing permits for entry and exit. The goal was to isolate some of the most violent areas and keep insurgents enclosed, allowing troops to establish security in other parts of the city.

This approach to security was intended to ensure relative physical security to given parts of the city without paralyzing it or creating security systems that did not function. This approach also allowed some economy of force. Focusing on security in the most troubled areas still involved more manpower than the U.S. forces and the ISF could deploy, but was far more practical than trying to both secure the entire perimeter and then secure the entire inner structure of the city.

There were, however, problems with this approach. All three of the initial attempts were made in Sunni areas in ways which further divided Iraqis along sectarian lines and made some feel that the United States was taking sides in the sectarian conflict. The enclosed communities did not drive out the local militias, and they had to be co-opted rather than left as a parallel force. There also had to be a clear effort to win the trust of the populations in the communities by providing basic services, employment, and infrastructure.

Sunni residents were divided about the plans. Some said they thought it would curtain some of the violence, but others said they felt like they were in jail. The Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party as well as Shi'ite Moqtada al-Sadr said they opposed the gated-communities idea because it would further divide the two sects. The U.S. military said it would remain "in dialogue" with the Iraqi government over the issue.[60] An Iraqi Army spokesman said that al-Maliki had approved of the plan and that the project would go on. He also emphasized that the concrete blocks were "barriers," not a "wall," in an attempt to stave off comparisons to the wall built by Israel in the West Bank and the Berlin Wall.[61]

This security effort also met initial opposition from elements in the Iraqi government. Prime Minister al-Maliki announced that he would stop work on the wall that the U.S. military had already started to build around Adhamiyah.

Al-Maliki said that the communities would only aggravate sectarian tensions and that it reminded people of "other walls."

On May 13, members of the Iraqi parliament testified their objections to the construction of walls around the neighborhoods in Baghdad, criticizing the policy as a form of sectarian discrimination. Kurdish parliamentarian Mahmoud Othman stated, "We must build bridges between the different groups, not build walls to separate them." The resolution against the barriers passed 138 to 88 in the 275-member house. (The bill must be approved by al-Maliki and his two deputies in order for it to become law or the house will be forced to redress the law).[62]

The result was a series of compromises over how much security to provide, the nature of the barriers, and the security arrangements. These allowed much of the plan to be gradually executed by September, although each new operation caused at least some local and broader political debate and controversy.

Ongoing Insurgent Attacks

The U.S. and Iraqi government operations provoked an almost inevitable response from movements like al-Qa'ida. Sunni Arab insurgents focused on large-scale attacks against sectarian or symbolic targets aimed at provoking full-scale civil war and undermining the surge. For example, on April 12, 2007, there were two large-scale attacks in the capital. A suicide bomber donated his truck on the historic al-Sarafiya Bridge in Baghdad, causing the steel structure to divide in two places and sending most of the bridge and cars into the Tigris River. At least ten people died and dozens were injured. The bridge was 75 years old and connected the Sunni neighborhood of Wasiriyah to the Shi'ite neighborhood of Utafiyah, making it a symbolic target.

The other bombing attack targeted a cafeteria frequented by Iraqi politicians in the well-secured Green Zone. The bomb detonated when parliamentarians were eating lunch, killing Mohammad Awad, a member of the Sunni National Dialogue Front; 22 were also wounded. The "Islamic State of Iraq"—headed by al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia—claimed responsibility for the attack. It was the second attack in the Green Zone in recent weeks; in March, mortars struck nearby as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was holding a press conference.[63] U.S. troops later found identification cards allowing entry into the Green Zone and the U.S. Embassy in an insurgent safe haven in western Baghdad.[64] There were a total of 64 attacks on the Green Zone between the start of the surge and the end of May 2007.

Other major attacks early in the surge included the following:

- On April 18, 2007, at least 170 people died in attacks in largely Shi'ite areas in the capital as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates arrived on a surprise visit. Attacks took place in Sadr City, the al-Sadriyah market on the eastern side of the Tigris, in Karrada, and several other areas.
- On April 30, 2007, at least 2 people were killed and 15 were wounded when a bus bomb exploded in a tunnel; it also badly damaged the tunnel, a main road into

Baghdad. A tanker laden with chlorine gas exploded near a restaurant west of the Iraqi city of Ramadi, killing up to 6 people and wounding 10. A suicide bomber wearing a vest packed with explosives killed 32 people when he blew himself up among mourners at a Shi'ite funeral in the town of Khalis, north of Baghdad. The attack took place inside a crowded mourning tent. More than 52 people were wounded.

- On May 6, 2007, a car bomb killed 35 people and wounded 80 others near a crowded market in Baghdad's Shi'ite neighborhood of Bayaa.
- On May 11, 2007, suicide truck bombers struck Iraqi police checkpoints on two bridges in a Shi'ite area south of Baghdad, killing 22 people and badly damaging one of the bridges. Police said 60 people were wounded.

Insurgents and the Green Zone

An increasing number of insurgent attacks struck at the heavily fortified area of the Green Zone after the start of the president's new strategy. Navy Rear Adm. Mark I. Fox said, ''There is unquestionably an increasing pattern of attacks against the International Zone. There's no doubt about that." In a UN report, 18 attacks against the Green Zone were reported in March 2007, 30 in April, and 39 by May 22. By mid-June, 26 people had been killed in the Green Zone since Feb. 19, 2007.[65]

Some of the attacks on the Green Zone in the spring of 2007 included the following:

- March 22, 2007: A rocket exploded near Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's office during a news conference for visiting UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.
- April 12, 2007: A suicide bomber penetrated numerous security checkpoints, detonating an explosive belt in a cafeteria in the Iraqi parliament building, killing one Iraqi lawmaker.[66] The attack targeted a cafeteria frequented by Iraqi politicians in the well-secured Green Zone. The bomb detonated when parliamentarians were eating lunch, killing Mohammad Awad, a member of the Sunni National Dialogue Front; 22 were also wounded. The "Islamic State of Iraq"—headed by Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia —claimed responsibility for the attack. It was the second attack in the Green Zone in recent weeks; in March, mortars struck nearby as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was holding a press conference.[67] U.S. troops later found identification cards allowing entry into the Green Zone and the U.S. Embassy in an insurgent safe haven in western Baghdad.[68]
- May 3, 2007: Four Asian contractors were killed in a rocket attack in the Green Zone.
- May 14, 2007: A rocket attack in the Green Zone wounded nine people.[69]
- May 16, 2007: A mortar shelling in the Green Zone killed two people.
- May 19, 2007: During Prime Minister Tony Blair's visit to Iraq, an artillery strike (either a mortar or rocket attack) hit the Green Zone, wounding one. One round hit the British Embassy compound.[70]

At the end of May, four British contractors and their bodyguard were kidnapped from the Green Zone. The gunmen who abducted the British civilians did not have to fire their guns, leading some to believe that militants had infiltrated the police and

received assistance from those working at the Finance Ministry complex.[71] General Petraeus said he suspected that the kidnapping was carried out by "the cell whose leader, Azhar al-Duleimi, we killed a few weeks back."[72]

On the same day, an Iraqi husband and wife were kidnapped from the U.S. Embassy and were allegedly killed by members of the Islamic State of Iraq.[73] On June 3, ten Mahdi Army militiamen were arrested in Numaniya, west of Kut, during an Iraqi Army offensive against the militia. U.S. officials said four men were killed and six more were arrested while they were caught setting up rockets to shoot into the Green Zone. The four men were shot by Apache Longbow helicopters, and the remaining six fled to Sadr City, where they were found and arrested.[74]

These attacks did not, however, produce major casualties or have a serious impact on U.S. operations, According to U.S. military and government officials, the biggest problem was the potential psychological impact of the strikes on the supposedly safe and fortified area.[75] "The mortars are coming from the same place every day," one Iraqi man living in the Green Zone said, "and no one is doing anything about it. Stuff like that gets to people" even more than the attacks themselves.[76]

The renewed attacks did force changes for personnel working in the Green Zone. On March 28, a rule was enacted, requiring everyone in the Green Zone to wear helmets and body armor outdoors. On May 3, the rule was expanded to require all residents to "remain within a hardened structure to the maximum extent possible and strictly avoid congregating outdoors." On May 19, an announcement strictly prohibited congregating outdoors "until further notice," and ordered that the palace pool area be closed.[77] Following the June 13 attack on the Askariya mosque, seven mortar rounds hit the Green Zone, killing three civilians.[78]

UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki-moon released a report on May 10, 2007, analyzing the conditions of the Green Zone. Ban requested funds to construct a better protected UN headquarters in the Green Zone, saying the UN could not risk "having to wind down operations due to unacceptable security risks."[79]

Some U.S. Embassy employees did complain about inadequate security in the Green Zone. The embassy staff of 1,000 was not reduced, however, and the threat was limited enough to be varied according to political conditions. Officials stated that important security precautions (such as the required usage of bulletproof vests and helmets and the use of warning sirens) had been set aside during highly publicized visits, such as the March 31, 2007, visit of Sen. John McCain and Vice President Dick Cheney.[80]

By July, many in the Green Zone almost took such attacks for granted. They were a constant low-level concern, but at least through September 2007, they did not develop into the kind of successes that changed U.S. strategy or threatened its success.

The Second Askariya Mosque Bombing

Other attacks were potentially more damaging to the surge strategy and were clearly designed to try to provoke an extreme response from Arab Shi'ites. On June 13, 2007, the Askariya shrine, the holiest Shi'ite mosque in Baghdad, was bombed

for the second time since February 22, 2006. The explosion brought down the two minarets that had been left standing after the 2006 bombing. Sunni Arabs were suspected in the attack.[81] Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker said, "The attacks on the bridges, on religious shrines, the attack on the parliament, the attacks on the population at large—it's clearly part of a concerted al-Qa'ida campaign to try to reignite widespread sectarian strife."[82]

Following the attack, a curfew was implemented and there was a ban on vehicles inside the city.[83] The curfews worked to minimize high-profile reprisal attacks.[84] Following the attack, only five bodies were found in Baghdad, about one-fifth of the usual daily toll.[85]

The insurgents did not, however, produce the result they sought. Both Sunni and Shi'ite religious leaders appealed to their constituents to remain calm. The Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani called on his followers to protest peacefully. Moqtada al-Sadr called for a mourning period of three days.[86] Al-Sadr called on his followers to restrain themselves from violent reprisal attacks.[87]

Moqtada al-Sadr's bloc in parliament did say it would refuse to participate until progress was made on rebuilding the mosque.[88] Following the attack, al-Sadr said, "The Iraqi people should know that there is no Sunni, and no Muslim, who would attack a shrine that is the burial place of our two imams."[89] The day after the bombing occurred, however, Shi'ite followers of Moqtada al-Sadr convened at the site of the bombing. U.S. troops and Iraqi police dispersed the demonstrators by firing into the air and flying fighter jets low over nearby rooftops.[90]

Some reprisal attacks did occur. At least 13 Sunni mosques and one Shi'ite shrine were attacked in Baya, Basra, and Diyala in the aftermath of the second Askariya mosque bombing.[91] The Ashrah al-Mubashra Sunni mosque was destroyed in central Basra. The mosque was attacked by hooded gunmen who forced the police guarding the mosque to flee. The attack was seen as evidence of a "huge penetration into the security forces in Basra, by militias," as admitted by an emergency force commander in the area.[92]

Sadrist elements were clearly involved in some of these attacks in spite of al-Sadr's public posture. Statements condemning the bombing and calls for calm were heard from Prime Minister al-Maliki, President Jalal Talabani, and Vice President Tariq Hashimi.[93] Al-Sadr's statement, however, did not stop some reprisal attacks from occurring.

Al Qa'ida also kept trying. A second attack on a Shi'ite mosque followed on June 19, 2007, when a powerful explosion destroyed part of the Khalani mosque in central Baghdad, killing 61 people and wounding 130.[94] Sunni leaders from the Arab Ghilani mosque and Shi'ite leaders from the Khalani mosque had been encouraging their followers to attend each other's Friday Prayers, to dissuade sectarian attacks.[95]

Gains in Baghdad in Spite of Insurgent Attacks

Nevertheless, the surge strategy did produce some significant gains in Baghdad as it began to be fully implemented. The Baghdad command put out weekly reports

during the first phase of the new Baghdad security plan, gauging which neighborhoods fell into each of the predetermined phases of military operations: disrupt, clear, control, and retain.[96]

At the end of May, there were 156 neighborhoods in Baghdad in the "disrupt" category, which meant that it was possible to keep insurgents off balance until full military presence was established. These areas included Sadr City. Another 155 neighborhoods fell into the "clear" category, which meant the military raided buildings and homes, block by block, to look for weapons and fighters. Some 128 neighborhoods fell into the "control" phase," which meant that U.S. and Iraqi forces were able to keep insurgents out and protect the population. Eighteen neighborhoods were said to be into the "retain" phase, which meant Iraqi security forces were largely relied upon to ensure that the area remained secure.[97]

This left many insecure areas in the city. A total of 146 of Baghdad's 457 neighborhoods (fewer than one-third) were said to be controlled by Iraqi and American troops on June 4, 2007. The remaining 311 either remained to be infiltrated by troops or still faced "resistance." While violence was reduced in many areas, the Sunni-Shi'ite mixed neighborhoods in western Baghdad remained especially dangerous. On June 22, Lieutenant General Odierno reported that the Baghdad operation was focusing on "clearing and controlling the security districts of Atamiyah in northeast, Rasheed in the south and portions of Mansour in the West."[98]

These reports were sometimes inconsistent. For example, on June 30, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., commander of Multi-National Division Baghdad, said that American and Iraqi forces were retaining 7 percent of the 474 neighborhoods in Baghdad. Fil reported that an additional 41–42 percent were being "controlled," 36 percent of the capital's neighborhoods were being "cleared," and the remaining 15 percent were being "disrupted."[99]

The limits to the surge during the spring of 2007 should, however, be kept in perspective. The second phase of the operation, Phantom Thunder, only began on June 15 and the principal clearing and holding operations were not anticipated to take shape until August. The Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report for June 2007 assessed the security developments in Baghdad as follows:

> Baghdad is the center of gravity in the struggle for political and economic influence in Iraq for irreconcilable violent groups. Although it is still too early to assess whether a sustainable trend is emerging, attacks in Baghdad declined as Coalition and Iraqi force presence expanded while Sunni insurgent groups and Shi'a militants departed or refrained from operations. Despite the departure of large numbers of JAM fighters from Baghdad, JAM has continued to act as a de-facto government in Sadr City. Although sectarian-motivated Iraqi-on-Iraqi violence has declined in Baghdad, violence against Coalition and Iraqi security forces remained consistent with previous levels. Despite heightened security measures and increased ISF proficiency at reducing civilian casualties from sectarian murders and executions, AQI maintained the ability to conduct infrequent, high profile, mass-casualty attacks in Baghdad.[100]

Lieutenant General Odierno was able to announce that the troop surge had made "some very clear progress" toward the end of June, citing the detention of nearly 18,000 people, the discovery of about 2,500 arms caches, the killing of over 3,184 enemy fighters, and the wounding of 1,106.[101]

U.S. analysts in Iraq stated in interviews in late July 2007 that the city was now 50 percent "secure" versus 8 percent at the start of the surge, although they noted that "secure" meant secure against repeated major attacks of violence and the kind of sectarian cleansing that involved traceable killings. Shi'ite sectarian cleansing continued in less overt and violent forms. Neighborhoods continued to divide along sectarian lines. Displacements, extortion, crime, kidnappings, and "disappearances" remained grim facts of life.

THE SITUATION IN BAGHDAD IN SEPTEMBER 2007

The outcome of the operation in Baghdad was still in doubt in September 2007, partly because of the lack of progress in political conciliation described later in this chapter. Many areas of the city remained troubled, and Shi'ite pressure on Sunnis and mixed areas did not stop. Sectarian cleansing continued, sometimes with the tolerance or active support of Iraqi forces and elements in the Iraqi government. The overall level of civilian killings in the city dropped, however, as did the number and size of areas where violence took place.

General Petraeus provided a progress report in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on September 11, 2007,

> In January 2007, in response to the horrific ethno-sectarian violence that spiraled out of control in 2006, and to an assessment in December 2006, that we were failing to achieve our objectives, a surge of forces began flowing into Iraq focusing on protecting the population and reducing sectarian violence, especially in Baghdad.
>
> In so doing, these forces have employed counterinsurgency practices, such as living among the people they are securing. In mid-June, with all the surge brigades in place, we launched a series of offensive operations in partnership with Iraqi security forces.
>
> These operations focused on expanding the gains achieved in the preceding months in Anbar province, pursuing al Qaeda in the Diyala river valley and several other areas, and clearing Baqouba, several key Baghdad neighborhoods, the remaining sanctuaries in Anbar province and important areas around Baghdad.
>
> The progress our forces have achieved with our Iraqi counterparts has, as I noted at the outset, been substantial. While there have been setbacks as well as successes and tough losses along the way, overall our tactical commanders see improvements in the security environment.
>
> We do not, however, just rely on gut feel or personal observations. To gauge progress and determine trends, we also conduct rigorous and consistent data collection and analysis. In fact, two U.S. intelligence agencies recently reviewed our methodology and concluded that the data we produce is the most accurate and authoritative in Iraq.
>
> As I mentioned up front, and as the chart before you reflects, the level of security incidents has decreased significantly since the start of the surge of offensive operations in

mid-June, declining in eight of the past 12 weeks, with the level of incidents in the past two weeks the lowest since June 2006.

Civilian deaths, of all categories, less natural causes, have also declined, considerably, by over 45 percent, Iraq-wide, since the height of sectarian violence in December. This is shown by the top line on this next chart. And the decline by some 70 percent in Baghdad is shown in the bottom line.

Periodic mass-casualty attacks, car bombs by al Qaeda, have tragically added to the numbers outside Baghdad, in particular. Even without the sensational attacks, however, the level of civilian deaths is of serious concern.

As the next chart shows, the number of ethno-sectarian deaths, an important subset of the overall civilian casualty figures, has also declined significantly since the height of the sectarian violence in December. Iraq-wide, as shown by the top line on this chart, ethno- sectarian deaths have come down by over 55 percent.

In Baghdad, as the bottom lines show, ethno-sectarian deaths have declined by some 80 percent since December. This chart also displays the density of sectarian incidents in various Baghdad neighborhoods, and it both reflects the progress made in reducing ethno-sectarian violence and identifies the area where more work must be done.

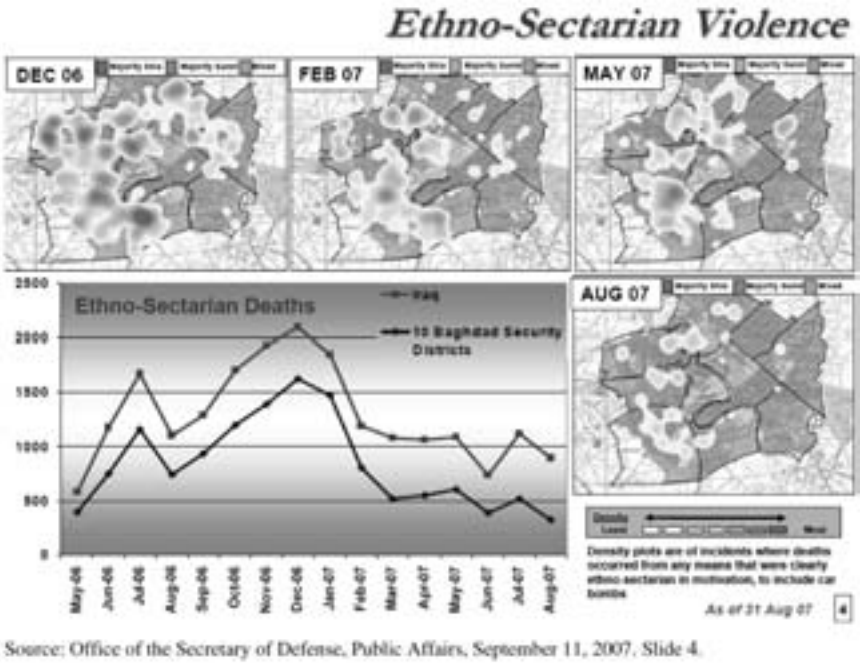
. . .I think one of the most important initiatives has been to ensure that the idea of securing a population by living among it is one of the tactics, techniques, and procedures that we practice. This has manifest itself in the form of the joint security stations that are combinations of Iraqi and coalition forces, jointly manning, generally, command-and-control and also, typically, some forces there as well.

Locations there in Baghdad, they are also in a number of other cities. There are also, however, patrol bases and combat outposts that have been established. Again, to ensure that our soldiers and Iraqi forces are in the neighborhoods, are in the areas.

. . .you cannot commute to this fight. You cannot secure a population by driving through it a few times in a day. You have to be there, really, 24 by 7. This has, in fact, had positive developments. The intelligence you get from this can actually be overwhelming, at a certain point, when they realize you are there to stay. It has worked exceedingly well in Ramadi, in Fallujah, and a number of other cities.[102]

General Petraeus provided three charts to illustrate his point that help demonstrate the level of progress in Baghdad:

- Figure 11.2 maps the change in the areas in Baghdad with a high frequency of killings and major acts of violence. It does not show lesser acts of violence or the impact of sectarian cleansing in terms of displacements, but the shift is still very significant.
- Figure 11.3 shows the decline in Iraqi civilian deaths in Baghdad and Iraq as a whole. This count is controversial because the methodology is based on uncertain collection methods and excludes many known killings that could have been the result of the insurgency or Shi'ite militia actions. It also counts only the worst form of violence. It is, however, based on consistent methods of intelligence collection and analysis over the period shown and the trend is still valid.
- Figure 11.4 shows the trend in major acts of violence by city/province, showing both Baghdad and several areas discussed later in this chapter. Baghdad is scarcely at peace, but violence is down strikingly relative to past peaks. Once again, only very serious violence clearly tied to the insurgents or militias is counted, and the methodology is



Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, September 11, 2007, Slide 4.

Figure 11.2 Shifts in Ethno-Sectarian Violence in Baghdad

based on uncertain collection methods and excludes many known acts that could have been the result of the insurgency or Shi'ite militia actions. It is, however, based on consistent methods of intelligence collection and analysis over the period shown and the trend is still valid.

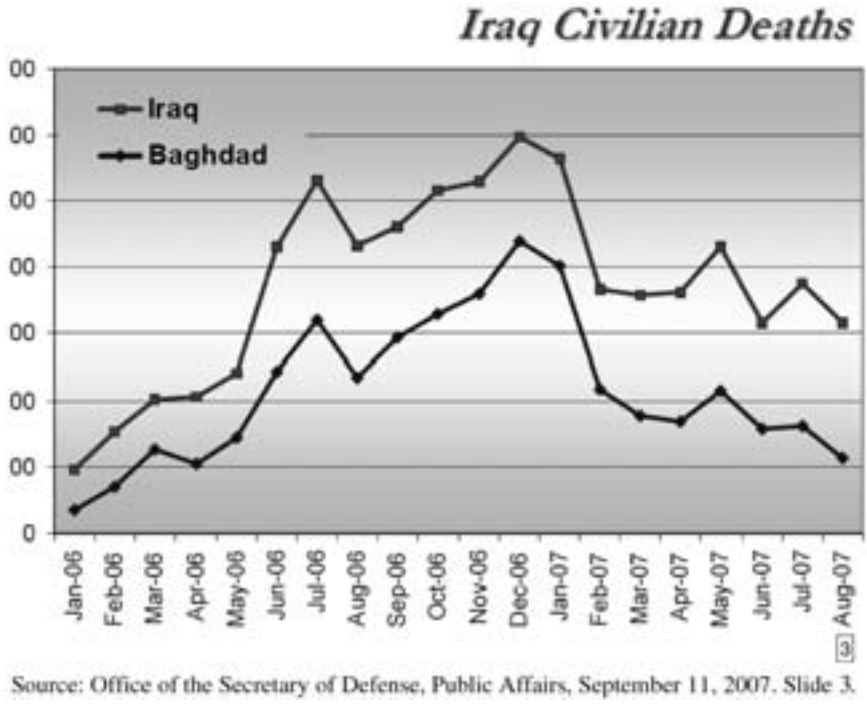
This did not, however, mean that many forms of violence less serious than outright killings did not continue or that the situation in Baghdad was under control, as the following exchange between Sen. Carl Levin and General Petraeus later in the hearing showed:[103]

SEN. LEVIN: General, there's a lengthy article in last Sunday's *New York Times* that assessed the surge. I don't know if you've had a chance to read that article, or...

GEN. PETRAEUS: I have not, no, sir.

SEN. LEVIN: The article was the result of work of 20 reporters who repeatedly visited 20 neighborhoods in Baghdad. They found that the residents had been killed or driven away from their homes in Baghdad.

More than 35,000 Iraqi have left their homes since the surge began, that in nearly all the Shiite-dominated areas of Baghdad, the Mahdi army has expanded and deepened its control of daily life. In Sadr City, the residents say the Mahdi militants control



Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, September 11, 2007. Slide 3.

Figure 11.3 Iraqi Civilian Deaths

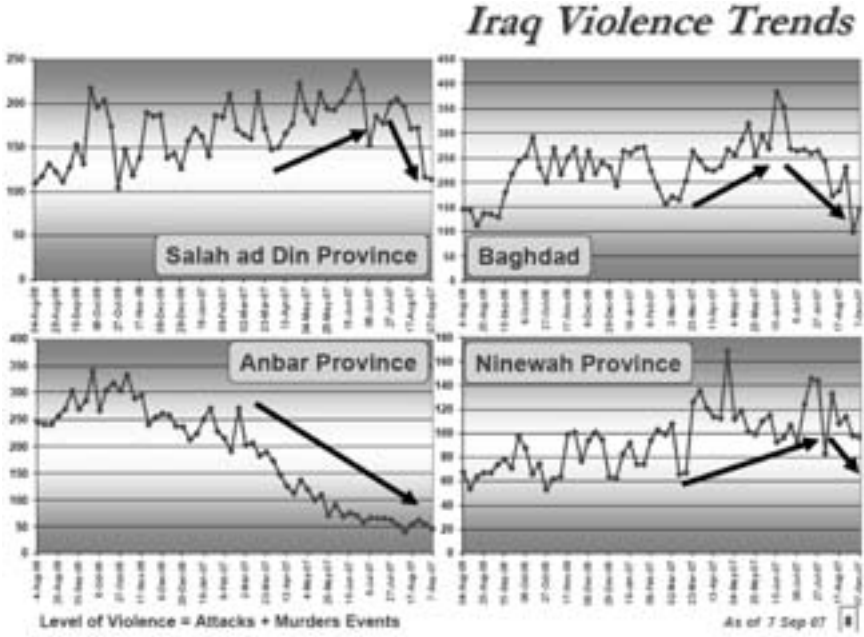
neighborhood security, gas stations, water supplies and real estate. In New Baghdad, residents say the market is now controlled by the Mahdi army. In Sadiya, once middle-class and mixed and relatively peaceful, crackdowns in nearby Sunni areas led to an influx of hardline Sunni insurgents.

The Shiites turned to their own militias, principally the Mahdi Army. Most residents have left—fleeing death squads from both sides. One of the most alarming findings of the article is that Sunnis and Shiites fear each other at the top levels of the government, and in the sweltering neighborhoods of Baghdad, hatreds are festering, not healing.

Do you have any reaction to that summary? It's a long article, but you didn't mention any specifics about the problems. I'm just wondering whether anything I read strikes you as being erroneous.

GEN. PETRAEUS: No. There are certainly all of those situations to be found in Baghdad, Mr. Chairman.

Various reports differed significantly over how much progress had been made in Baghdad. The White House and the Congress's Government Accountability Office described virtually the same events and development in different ways.[104] There were also many different independent analyses of events, U.S. reporting on such developments, and the meaning of the available data.



Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, September 11, 2007. Slide 8.

Figure 11.4 Iraqi Violence Trends

The White House report on the degree to which the situation in Baghdad had met benchmarks set forth in a congressional reporting requirement stated the following:

> Almost 3 months into surge operations, the coordinated offensive operations of ISF and Coalition forces have made significant progress against terrorist and extremist elements, particularly in Baghdad, the surrounding "belts," and Diyala. In Baghdad, the focus of operations has been along the fault lines between Sunni and Shi'a neighborhoods, where economic and social conditions make the population most susceptible to extremism. Our counterinsurgency strategy relies on establishing joint security stations in troubled neighborhoods, continuous joint ISF and Coalition Force security operations, Coalition outposts to expand the reach of Coalition forces, and reconstruction programs to restore quality of life. These actions have resulted in a steady improvement in population security, increasing trust of Baghdad residents, and a decrease in the number of areas where terrorists and extremists can operate. In late March 2007, only about 10 percent of Baghdad neighborhoods were secured by Iraqi and Coalition forces. By the end of August more than three-quarters of the city's neighborhoods had been cleared and now benefit from the continued presence of security forces.
>
> . . . While there are still millions of Iraqis who have been displaced from their homes by intimidation and violence, some small groups are beginning to return to areas where violence has been reduced. By both our estimate and those of the national intelligence community, the number of ethno-sectarian attacks and deaths nationwide has fluctuated somewhat over the past several months, but they are now less than half of the December

2006 levels. Ethno-sectarian attacks in the Baghdad districts have fallen even more sharply, down to roughly one-quarter the levels of December 2006. Total attacks on civilians across Iraq have declined in 13 of the past 18 weeks. Unfortunately, total civilian casualties did not fall as significantly over the same period, as al-Qa'ida launched several high-casualty vehicle IED attacks in Baghdad and the northern provinces in an attempt to provoke greater sectarian violence. However, in a sign of progress, Iraqis did not respond to these attacks with widespread sectarian-based retaliation, allowing for an underlying downward trend in civilian casualties. Overall, these trends have been achieved through increased Coalition and Iraqi presence in Baghdad, operations in the Baghdad belts, and an increase in the number of national leaders who have publicly renounced sectarian violence and called for restraint in the wake of high-profile IED attacks.

. . .Nearly all of the planned joint security stations, Coalition outposts, and other patrol bases have been established across Baghdad and the surrounding area. As of August 31, 2007, 30 of 33 planned joint security stations were operational and 31 Coalition combat outposts had achieved operational capability. Joint security stations provide an around-the-clock security presence in most of Baghdad and are particularly effective as they merge Coalition partnering with Iraqi presence and action. There are numerous examples where Iraqi presence has facilitated a lower application of force and a more positive result. Other stations are being established in outlying areas where interaction with the local people can have a direct impact on the reduction of violence within the city. This increased interaction with the local population should continue to suppress crime and sectarian violence as well as provide valuable intelligence to support economic growth, political accommodation, and counterinsurgency operations.

Joint security stations are also being successfully employed in al-Anbar province and numerous other locations across Iraq. Coalition leaders will continue to consult with the Baghdad Operational Center and national leadership to determine additional emplacements.[105]

The fact remained, however, that the surge strategy had succeeded largely in driving al-Qa'ida and the most violent Sunni insurgent elements out of much of the city, but had not defeated the Sunni insurgents and had confronted only a few of the most extreme elements of the Shi'ite militias.

It also created a situation where less violent forms of Shi'ite sectarian cleansing continued to push Sunnis out of the city or threaten them wherever the United States did not control the area and intervene. As the White House report stated, "Coalition forces report that murders and executions assessed to be ethno-sectarian in nature have declined significantly both in Baghdad and nationwide from their high in December 2006. However, the increase in ethno-sectarian deaths in July and August of 2007—largely a function of three sizable car bomb attacks in Kirkuk and Ninewa provinces—demonstrates the challenge that ethno-sectarian violence continues to pose for Iraq, particularly in rural locations that have light security force presence."[106] There was real progress in many areas between January and September, but real and lasting security in Baghdad, as in the rest of Iraq, required political conciliation and much broader levels of day-to-day security throughout the city and its environs.

THE NATION OF IRAQ AS THE "CENTER OF GRAVITY"

The fighting also showed that security in Baghdad did not bring security in Iraq as a whole. The Sunni insurgents in Baghdad were not killed or captured as much as they were driven into other areas. As levels of violence fell in Baghdad, violence increased in surrounding areas. U.S. troops in Diyala Province and many of the other Sunni areas around Baghdad saw an influx of Sunni insurgents in late February, which strained their manpower and slowed the progress of economic and political initiatives.

In a press briefing on February 21, 2007, MNF-I spokesman Major General Caldwell indicated that the U.S. military recognized that Baghdad was not the only "center of gravity" in the war and that no final decision had been made by the commander of U.S. ground forces—Lieutenant General Odierno—on where incoming brigades would be sent.

> As far as the fringes go, we are very sensitive to that. And as these additional forces flow in, I think General Odierno will be the first to tell you that he has not made his final recommendation to General Petraeus where he would like to employ those final two brigades. Clearly in the operational planning, they've looked at areas within Baghdad at how they would use them and where they would use them. But as we watch what they call the belt around Baghdad, it's clear indications right now that there is increased activity there. And again, without getting into operational decisions—because none have been made yet—but I do know that General Odierno is looking at that very closely. He's talked about it. And when he makes a recommendation to General Petraeus as to where those additional brigades go will be come time in coming as they watch and the situation continues to develop.[107]

Moreover, as is discussed later in this chapter and in depth in the next chapter, the civil tensions and conflict between Arabs and Kurds in the north and Shi'ites in the south were largely unaffected by the fighting against Sunni insurgents in Baghdad and the center.

Pushing Insurgents Out of Baghdad

Pressure on Baghdad pushed many insurgents into others areas, particularly the ring cities around Baghdad proper and in Diyala. A Baghdad centric strategy threatened to win tenuous control over part of Baghdad while seeing many previously relatively stable areas outside come under Sunni insurgent control or become new centers of the fighting. This forced major changes in operations outside Baghdad, although some elements of the result of U.S. and Iraqi offensives had been planned as part of the original surge strategy.

Operation Phantom Thunder was launched in May 2007 as a response to an increase of insurgent activity outside of Baghdad, as insurgents fled the surge troops. Phantom Thunder included several operations in the "Baghdad belt." As of late June 2007, Operation Phantom Thunder consisted of Operation Arrowhead Ripper,

which focused on clearing Baquba and other parts of southwestern Diyala, and Operation Marne Torch, which aimed to clear al-Qa'ida bases southeast of Baghdad.

It also included suboperations in Fallujah and the area south of Lake Tharthar in Anbar; continued efforts by Iraqi security forces to combat Shi'ite militias in southern Iraq, particularly in Diwaniyah and Nasiriyah, continued efforts by Iraqi security forces to maintain order in Mosul and throughout Ninewah, U.S. and Iraqi Special Forces targeting high-value al-Qa'ida operatives, and continued efforts by U.S. and Iraqi forces to clear and hold areas of Baghdad in Operation Fardh al-Qanoon. The fighting virtually became a city-by-city struggle for sectarian control in mixed cities and a steady effort to consolidate power in areas where one sect or ethnicity dominated.

Once Operation Phantom Thunder took hold, Coalition and Iraqi forces witnessed an increased number of attacks on military personnel, noting a slight decrease in civilian casualties due to sectarian violence. The increase in U.S. fatalities in May and June was due to three factors: (1) new tactics that demand a higher profile for U.S. troops in an attempt to secure Baghdad's neighborhoods and prevent civilian deaths, (2) a greater number of explosives attacks with greater degrees of lethality, and (3) a rise in direct attacks on U.S. troops, involving tactics with increasing sophistication.

Baquba Becomes a New Center of Violence

As U.S.–Iraqi operations secured parts of Baghdad and tribal resistance grew in Anbar, al-Qa'ida in Iraq members moved to Diyala, making it the center of their operations. According to official estimates, Diyala had as many as 2,000 Sunni insurgents as of June 19.[108] Insurgent activity in Diyala Province then continued to increase throughout the spring of 2007.

The resulting influx of insurgents forced U.S. forces and the ISF to oust much larger forces in the north in spite of the tribal pressures on al-Qa'ida in Anbar. By March, U.S. military officials in Diyala estimated that in broad terms, there were some 2,000 insurgents operating in Baquba alone. These insurgents belonged to the wide range of Sunni groups described earlier. They included former Ba'athists, al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia, the 20th Revolutionary Brigades, Ansar Al Sunna, foreign terrorists, and disorganized criminal gangs. Tribal loyalties in Diyala were also strong; there were 25 main tribes and at least 100 subtribes.[109]

Col. David Sutherland, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat, 1st Cavalry Division, said that tactically, the United States and the Iraqis had enough troops to clear out the provincial capital of Baquba, where violence was the worst. Sutherland stated, "Trying to find one individual leader who will say, 'We will not allow terrorists on our land. We will not allow IEDs to be placed on our land. We will give you support' is difficult because you can't find just one leader in Diyala." He added, "If you're asking what I need, I need the provincial council to come to work and show backbone, and I need local media . . . I don't need more forces." The provincial council in Diyala

had not met for six months and most of the local media had fled due to insurgent threats.[110]

There was little doubt that such tactical operations were largely successful. For example, in 72 hours in Baquba the U.S. military found and disabled 32 IEDs and recovered 16 rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and other weaponry. Training Iraqi forces in the province was also progressing. U.S. trainers said that animosity did exist between the Iraqi Army and the police due to sectarian differences, but they were gradually learning to work together.

The overall progress in suppressing the insurgents did slow in late February 2007, however, due to a large influx of Sunni insurgents from Baghdad. Insurgents fled north to avoid the security crackdown in Baghdad, which put increased pressure on the smaller contingent of U.S. troops in Diyala. Capt. Paul Charlock stationed in Diyala said, "I was here in 2004 and I don't remember them ever attacking tanks in open daylight, but now that's exactly what they are doing. There's a big Sunni influx here, and in the last month or so it's been pretty violent."[111]

Furthermore, Iraqi security forces provided limited support for U.S. troops in Baquba. For example, one U.S. unit shared a police building with members of the Emergency Response Force (ERF). U.S. forces lived on the second story and took turns patrolling the rooftop, picking off snipers and insurgents planting IEDs. Iraqi police, however, lived on the bottom level and rarely went to the roof. A U.S. soldier said that if the United States left the station, it would be quickly overrun. Iraqi members of the ERF unit, however, said they did not venture outside because they lacked protection and weapons. They also reported that they had not been paid in up to eight months.[112]

The U.S. commander for MNF-North, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Mixon, described the situation as follows:

> We have seen an increase of violence in Diyala Province, but that is caused by, really, two things. Number one, we do think some of the enemy forces not only have moved out of Baghdad, but also may have moved from Al Anbar province. It is important to the Sunni insurgency to try and control Diyala. That has been part of the increase. But more importantly, we have increased our offensive operations, and we have killed a significant number of this enemy that is trying to get control in Diyala...
>
> I would tell you that we've generally seen about a 30 percent increase in offensive actions and attacks. Many of those are initiated by us; some are initiated by them. I can tell you that over the last couple of months we have killed in excess of 175 of the enemy in Diyala, and we anticipate with ongoing operations that we will kill or capture many more.[113]

The Commander of the 5th Iraqi Division, Maj. Gen. Shakir Halail Husain, said, "Al Qa'ida represents the most threat against units in Diyala." Colonel Sutherland agreed that the most hostile attacks were conducted by Sunni Arab insurgents, but that Shi'ite militias were also a top concern.[114] Mixon also stated that most of the violence was a result of Sunni insurgent groups, although there was a sectarian fault

line as well. For example, U.S. troops found a weapons cache with enough materials to make 130 explosively formed penetrators (EFPs), which were attributed to Shi'ite militias. Despite some successes, Mixon concluded, "Could I use more forces in Diyala? No question about it. And I'm in discussions of that with General Odierno as he attempts to balance the requirements in Baghdad."

Additional U.S. troops did arrive in Baquba on March 13, 2007. Some 700 troops were transferred from Taji to join the 3,500 U.S. forces already stationed in Diyala.[115] The U.S. military stated that additional troops would be transferred to Diyala as they became available, and Caldwell said in a press briefing on May 23, 2007, that some 3,000 U.S. troops had been transferred to Diyala Province in the previous two months.[116]

By April 2007, attacks on U.S. troops in Baquba had more than doubled since the same period in 2006, and although U.S. and Iraqi troops had uncovered a growing number of weapons caches, the stockpiles left over from Saddam Hussein's regime more than adequately supplied the insurgents. As in Baghdad, the number of sectarian murders decreased with the influx of U.S. troops, but the number of roadside bombs rose from 267 in April 2006 to 438 in April 2007, and the number of direct fire attacks quadrupled from 52 to 220 over the course of a year.[117]

U.S. forces also noted that the insurgents were increasingly well organized and well trained in 2007. For example, they staged several attacks to take over American and Iraqi outposts in Baquba that were well coordinated and clearly had been planned in advance. In the case of the Iraqi outposts, the insurgents succeeded, and they were repelled from the U.S. post only after troops fired 2,000 rounds from their Bradleys and 13,000 rounds from M-240 machine guns. In early March 2007, insurgents also almost captured a four-man U.S. sniper team after they cut off their escape routes and chased them through Baquba for four hours.

U.S. military officials and members of the Diyala Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) were increasingly aware that the insurgents' tactics of intimidation and monetary rewards would be difficult to combat.[118] The insurgents' ability to predict U.S. offensives also grew. In several instances in March and April 2007, offensives involving several hundred U.S. soldiers accomplished little because insurgents had already fled the small towns. Troops were unable to get much information out of the remaining women and children and were forced to return to base without any detainees. U.S. forces were also given faulty intelligence by civilians and Iraqi police officers, which sometimes led to an ambush.

Insurgents launched better-coordinated attacks. U.S. troops said that insurgents clearly had planned out their attacks in advance, using mortars, RPGs, and machine guns. The military estimated that insurgents carried out 27 coordinated and complex attacks in March 2007. U.S. forces in Diyala increasingly called it the "worst place" in the country, and it had become the third most dangerous province in Iraq, after Anbar and Baghdad.[119]

A large-scale attack against U.S. troops in Diyala on April 23, 2007, underscored the intensity of the insurgency as well as the exposure of U.S. troops in the new surge strategy. A suicide bomber drove his truck into the U.S. military outpost in Baquba,

killing 9 and injuring 20. It was the largest single attack on U.S. troops since August 2005. Another bombing the same day at an Iraqi police checkpoint killed 7 policemen and injured 13. On April 28, 2007, police found 27 bodies in Baquba, most showing signs of torture.

The growing intensity of the fighting in Baquba brought normal life to a standstill. Most basic services like food and fuel supply had collapsed, and it was too dangerous for contractors or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to enter the town. Unemployment was rising, which helped create volunteers for the insurgency, which often paid $300 to plant a roadside bomb.

Sectarian cleansings and displacement in the provincial capital were also as devastating and as intense as in Baghdad. Large numbers of Sunnis had fled Baghdad for Baquba in 2006 after being displaced by Shi'ite militias. The influx of Sunnis to Baquba then displaced Shi'ite families. The Shi'ite-dominated Diyala Provincial Council responded by appointing a sectarian police chief who allegedly arrested dozens of Sunnis for no reason.

There were, however, some positive signs. A group of tribal sheiks created a group that opposed al-Qa'ida and supported the efforts of the U.S. troops. It was based off of the tribal association formed in al Anbar Province in the fall of 2006.[120]

In a joint Iraqi–U.S. operation, which began in the last week of March northeast of Baquba, more than 30 insurgents were killed and 28 were detained, the U.S. military said. Over 15 weapon caches were found and two insurgent safe havens were cleared.

In mid-May, Army Maj. Gen. Benjamin R. "Randy" Mixon asserted that he lacked a sufficient amount of troops to secure Diyala Province. Mixon blamed the Iraqi government for allowing bureaucracy, sectarian discord, and corruption to impede its ability to assist U.S. troops in Diyala. Only one U.S. Army brigade, or about 3,500 troops, exists in Diyala Province, compared to Al Anbar that has four brigades, and the areas in and around Baghdad, which have ten.[121]

More Sophisticated Insurgent Attacks

Insurgents also launched more coordinated attacks. On May 18, 2007, about 50 suspected insurgents attacked a U.S. base in Baquba, sparking a clash involving U.S. soldiers and helicopters that left as many as six suspected insurgents dead.[122] On May 19, gunmen dressed in Iraqi police and military uniforms attacked Hamid Shifia village of Shi'ite Kurds northeast of Baghdad in Diyala Province. Police said 13 people were killed and 12 were wounded; however, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) reported 15 dead and 1 wounded. The PUK Web site said that the gunmen, suspected of being Shi'ites from the Islamic State of Iraq, entered the village under the guise of conducting a military raid. They separated the men from the women and opened fire on the men, according to the PUK Web site. Diyala Province Police Lt. Mohammed Hakman said that the gunmen also set fire to 30 houses.[123]

Residents of the village had posted guards at the entrance to the town, anticipating an attack by Sunni Arab insurgents. However, when the gunmen arrived in Iraqi

police and military uniforms, the guards waved the gunmen through. "Our area was very quiet and there was no violence until a month ago when some Sunnis helped Qa'ida find a safe haven in nearby villages," said Ahmed Qasim Mula, a village resident.[124] On May 21, gunmen ambushed a minibus passing from Gisaireen to Hibhib in Diyala Province, killing five passengers, including a child.[125]

U.S. troops were increasingly vulnerable to these kinds of attacks as a result of the new counterinsurgency offensive.[126] On May 12, an organized attack on a U.S. military patrol left four soldiers and one interpreter dead and three soldiers missing 12 miles west of Mahmudiyah, a city in the region south of Baghdad nicknamed the "Triangle of Death." The ambush followed several similar attacks against U.S. troops, producing high daily death tolls. A senior military official said that the attack was carefully planned.[127]

A military spokesman in Baghdad, Lt. Col. Christopher Garver, said that two soldiers were stopped in two Humvees out of view of the rest of their unit. Their assignment was to watch for insurgents planting bombs on the road. The two vehicles were incinerated in the attack. Members of the unit heard the explosion and called for a pilotless reconnaissance aircraft to search the area, which detected the vehicles 15 minutes later.[128] The victims were assigned to the 10th Mountain Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team.[129]

Approximately 4,000 American troops searched for the three who were allegedly kidnapped during the ambush in Mahumudiyah. American troops conducted the searches southwest of Baghdad around Yousifiya, a market town of about 5,000 people in the predominately Sunni area ranging 20 miles south of Baghdad. More than 900 residents were detained, and a bomb killed an American soldier.[130]

On May 14, the Islamic State of Iraq claimed that it was holding the three soldiers who were abducted on May 12, although no proof was offered.[131] The insurgent group made the claim on a Web site, warning the U.S. military to stop the search, and suggested that the abductions were meant to avenge the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl in the same area, as well as abuses committed by U.S. troops at Abu Ghraib.[132]

One of the missing soldiers, Pfc. Joseph J. Anzack, Jr., was found in the Euphrates River 12 miles south of the site of the attack. Reports from Iraqi police said that witnesses saw two other bodies in the river clad in U.S. uniforms, but the bodies had become submerged before this could be confirmed.[133]

Operation Phantom Thunder

Lieutenant General Odierno said on June 22, 2007, "We are beyond a surge of forces, and we are now into a surge of operations." The open-ended operation named Operation Phantom Thunder sought to incorporate the current security operations under way throughout Iraq. According to the Iraq Report by the Institute for the Study of War, the initial deployment of troops to Baghdad during the first phase of Operation Phantom Thunder was deliberate in setting the stage for the second phase of the operation.[134]

The operation coordinated offensives aimed at clearing levels of al-Qa'ida, Sunni, and Shi'ite extremists near and around Baghdad. Operation Phantom Thunder deployed 20 brigade combat teams, two additional Marine battalions, and a Marine expeditionary unit. Of the five surge brigades initially deployed to operate in Baghdad, only two remained in Baghdad proper by late June.[135]

On June 22, Lieutenant General Odierno reported that 159 enemies had been killed, 721 detainees had been captured, 128 weapons caches had been seized, 7 car bombs had been disabled, and 10 "house-borne IEDs" had been found.[136]

Operation Arrowhead Ripper and Baquba

Operation Arrowhead Ripper was planned to last for 30 to 60 days.[137] It was aimed at eradicating al-Qa'ida's influence in Baquba and simultaneously allowing the provincial government in Diyala to gain support there. Brig. Gen. Mick Bednarek, deputy commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division in Baquba, said, "The key significance, though, is getting the Iraqi ministries engaged to provide fundamental goods and services, such as food, fuel, displaced persons support, and education. The governor will have oversight and the people will start to see improved basic services which will build the trust and confidence of the people not only in the provincial government, but in the central government as well."[138]

General Petraeus said on June 21 that Arrowhead Ripper was targeting al-Qa'ida operatives who had moved from al-Anbar Province from mid-March to late June. On June 21 he said that similar operations were occurring all around Baghdad, using the five brigades and a combat aviation brigade and Marine Expeditionary Unit.[139] Approximately 3,000 additional U.S. troops were deployed to Diyala at the end of May.[140] About 10,000 soldiers were deployed in Operation Arrowhead Ripper.[141]

The attack was part of a larger campaign targeting IED and vehicle-borne IED operations in the area. American officials estimated that the majority of car and truck bombs being used by al-Qa'ida were built outside of Baghdad. However, the bombing of the Khalani mosque on June 19 was done with a bomb rigged with TNT a little less than a mile away from the mosque. Brig. Gen. Qassim Atta, an Iraqi spokesman for the Baghdad security plan, said on June 20 that insurgents began building car bombs within the city so as to avoid checkpoints.[142]

More than 2,000 U.S. troops were deployed in the initial attack. The operation was led by the 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, supported by two other brigades.[143] In the first phase of the attack, U.S. forces cut off the western part of Baquba, where an estimated 300 to 500 al-Qa'ida fighters had been operating. Helicopters and tanks were used to cut off escape routes from the city.[144] In the second phase of the attack, troops began clearing the area, house by house and street by street.[145]

Plans for the operation called for securing the area in which they were fighting, preventing insurgents from fleeing to other areas. Stryker armored vehicles were used to block the Western outskirts of Baquba and a main north-south route that runs through the center of the provincial capital.[146]

Col. Steve Townsend, the commander of the 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, said, "Rather than let the problem export to some other place and then have to fight them again, my goal is to isolate this thing and cordon it off."[147] American forces stopped any resident in Baquba who was seen as a potential fighter, took biometric data, and tested him or her for the presence of explosive material.[148] Over 100 Iraqis on the eastern side of the city worked with American troops to prevent insurgents from escaping Baquba.[149] Members from Sunni insurgent groups, operating under the umbrella group United Jihad Factions Council, worked with U.S. forces in the offensive against al-Qa'ida in Iraq.[150]

On June 22, Lieutenant General Odierno reported that three brigades were operating in the Baghdad "belt" to the north and east of Baghdad, in Diyala, and three more brigades were operating in other parts of northern Iraq. Two of the three brigades operating in Diyala were focused on capturing or eliminating the enemy as they tried to escape from the capital of Baquba toward other areas such as Baghdad.[151]

It was also reported on June 22 that 17 al-Qa'ida fighters were killed by Coalition forces in the operation. However, news emerged in the following week that the fighters may have been civilians or militants from another organization.[152] Though the first phase of the operation was intended to keep insurgents from escaping the area, Lieutenant General Odierno stated that an estimated 80 percent of al-Qa'ida leadership had fled Baquba before the start of the operation. Odierno said that somehow al-Qa'ida had anticipated the attack and fled the area, leaving mid-level operatives and fighters to fend for themselves. It was suspected that the 1920 Brigade fighters could have indirectly leaked information regarding the attack, tipping off al-Qa'ida.

Progress as of September 2007

The fighting in Diyala, the Baghdad ring, and other key areas along the Sunni-Shi'ite fault line remained serious in September 2007, and much the same differences existed over the importance of such progress within the U.S. government and among outside experts as have been described previously for Baghdad. As Figures 11.2, 11.3, and 11.4 have shown, violence was down by some important measures, but scarcely ended. It is also striking that much of the MNF-I reporting that quantified such trends did not show such data for Diyala or Baquba.

The White House report on progress in meeting congressional benchmarks cited earlier in discussing Baghdad was sometimes accused of painting too favorable a picture. Nevertheless, it stated the following:

> Prior to clearing operations in Baqubah, Coalition operations were plagued by IED attacks and had difficulty locating insurgent cells and weapons caches. Once Coalition and Iraqi forces established a permanent presence in the city, weekly IED and indirect fire attacks dropped by 75 percent, and local citizens began pointing out booby-trapped houses, buried IEDs and weapons caches. Total attacks against civilians, ISF, and Coalition forces for all of Diyala province have decreased in 7 of the past 10 weeks.

In the past month alone more than 140 IEDs and 61 weapons caches have been cleared, in great part due to tips from local residents.

. . .Despite these gains, progress against militia extremists is mixed. Operations conducted since May have significantly contributed to eliminating militia control of local security in areas that Coalition forces have cleared and now hold. In some cities such as Baghdad, Ramadi, Abu Ghraib, and Baqubah, local militia members are formally joining the local Iraqi security forces and providing effective community security, as well as valuable tips on caches and the location of extremist leaders. Despite the recent assassination of the elected governors in Qadisiyah and Muthanna, we believe that discrete offensive operations against militia extremist leaders in the central southern provinces offer the opportunity for larger gains against the militias. However, militias are still acting outside the law in the uncleared parts of Baghdad and the southern provinces of Karbala, Basra, Qadisiyah, and Maysan. In these areas, militia members have either infiltrated Iraqi Security Forces or brokered deals with the local ISF or civilian leadership.

Gen. David H. Petraeus also kept progress in perspective in his formal testimony to the House Armed Services Committee on September 10, 2007,

To be sure, trends have not been uniformly positive across Iraq, as is shown by this chart depicting violence levels in several key Iraqi provinces. The trend in Ninevah Province, for example, has been much more up and down, until a recent decline, and the same is true in Sala ad Din Province, though recent trends there and in Baghdad have been in the right direction. In any event, the overall trajectory in Iraq—a steady decline of incidents in the past three months—is still quite significant. The number of car bombings and suicide attacks has also declined in each of the past 5 months, from a high of some 175 in March . . . , to about 90 this past month. While this trend in recent months has been heartening, the number of high profile attacks is still too high, and we continue to work hard to destroy the networks that carry out these barbaric attacks.

Our operations have, in fact, produced substantial progress against Al Qaeda and its affiliates in Iraq. . . . in the past 8 months, we have considerably reduced the areas in which Al Qaeda enjoyed sanctuary. We have also neutralized 5 media cells, detained the senior Iraqi leader of Al Qaeda-Iraq, and killed or captured nearly 100 other key leaders and some 2,500 rank-and-file fighters. Al Qaeda is certainly not defeated; however, it is off balance and we are pursuing its leaders and operators aggressively. Of note, as the recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq explained, these gains against Al Qaeda are a result of the synergy of actions by: conventional forces to deny the terrorists sanctuary; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to find the enemy; and special operations elements to conduct targeted raids. A combination of these assets is necessary to prevent the creation of a terrorist safe haven in Iraq.

In the past six months we have also targeted Shi'a militia extremists, capturing a number of senior leaders and fighters, as well as the deputy commander of Lebanese Hezbollah Department 2800, the organization created to support the training, arming, funding, and, in some cases, direction of the militia extremists by the Iranian Republican Guard Corps' Qods Force. These elements have assassinated and kidnapped Iraqi governmental leaders, killed and wounded our soldiers with advanced explosive devices provided by Iran, and indiscriminately rocketed civilians in the International Zone and elsewhere. It is increasingly apparent to both Coalition and Iraqi leaders that Iran,

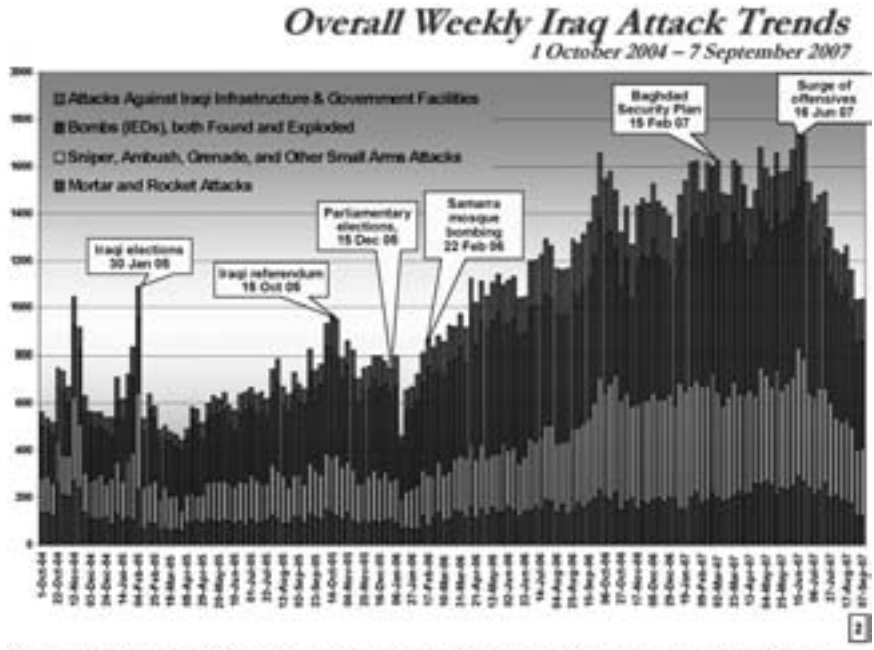
through the use of the Qods Force, seeks to turn the Iraqi Special Groups into a Hezbollah-like force to serve its interests and fight a proxy war against the Iraqi state and coalition forces in Iraq.[153]

Figures 11.5, 11.6, and 11.7 help put the trends in the insurgency and civil violence into further perspective, although they are subject to all of the problems in collection and analysis cited earlier for Figures 11.2, 11.3, and 11.4.

- Figure 11.5 shows that the map of major centers of violence in Iraq had not changed radically and that the same mix of insurgency and civil conflict continued to drive the country, with much of the insurgency centered in Diyala and surrounding areas.
- Figure 11.6 shows that the nationwide trend in major attacks dropped back to the levels of the spring of 2006 by September 2007, although they remained much higher than in 2005, and were still very serious. The fighting in the center and Diyala did much to shape such trends.
- Figure 11.7 shows the trend in high-profile attacks had also dropped back to the levels of the spring of 2006 by September 2007, although they remained much higher than in 2005, and were still very serious. Again, the fighting in the center and Diyala did much to shape such trends.

Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, September 11, 2007, Slide 1.

Figure 11.5 Nationwide Patterns of Violence in Iraq in September 2007


Overall Weekly Iraq Attack Trends
1 October 2004 – 7 September 2007
Attacks Against Iraqi Infrastructure & Government Facilities
Bombs (IEDs), both Found and Exploded
Sniper, Ambush, Grenade, and Other Small Arms Attacks
Mortar and Rocket Attacks
Iraqi elections 30 Jan 05
Iraqi referendum 15 Oct 05
Parliamentary elections, 15 Dec 05
Samarra mosque bombing 22 Feb 06
Baghdad Security Plan 15 Feb 07
Surge of offensives 16 Jun 07

Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, September 11, 2007. Slide 2.

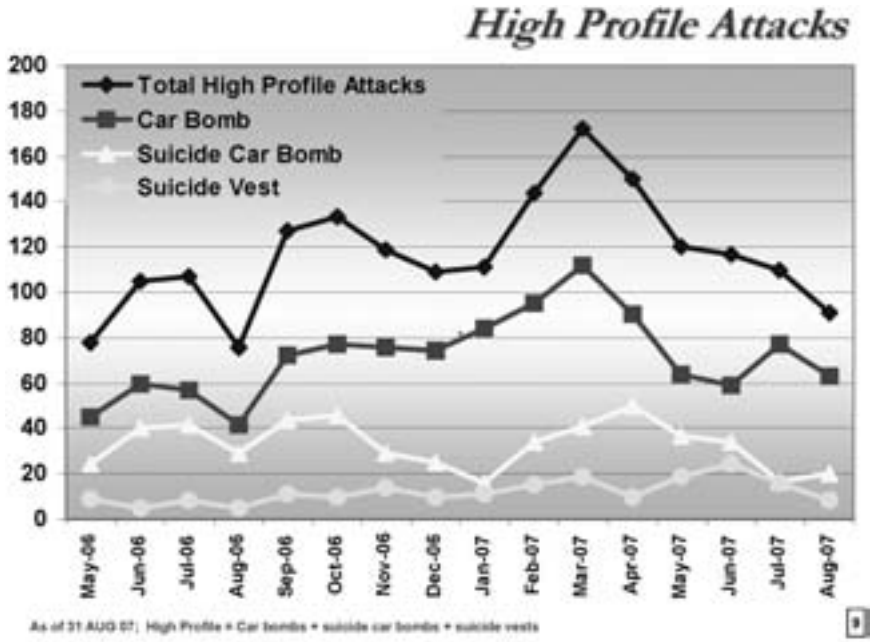
Figure 11.6 Overall Weekly Attack Trends in Iraq: October 2004 to September 2007

ETHNIC AND SECTARIAN TENSION IN NORTHERN IRAQ

Despite the fact that the Kurds called their region the "other Iraq," northern Iraq was not immune to the violence. Sectarian tensions had existed in Kirkuk and Mosul for three years, and the violence was now spreading from Baghdad to the northern areas at a faster rate. U.S. and Iraqi officials said in the first week of April that the security plan would be extended to Mosul to quiet sectarian tensions, although they did not say when new U.S. and Iraqi troops could be expected in the northern city. Attacks against Iraqi security forces in Mosul had recently increased. Mosul would be the second area to take surge forces originally planned for Baghdad.[154] A cumulative summary of attacks in the Mosul area is provided in Figure 11.8.

Some attacks were carefully targeted against minorities in ways designed to create tensions between Kurds and Arabs. A Yazidi woman was stoned to death on April 7 by members of the Yazidi community for having romantic relations with a Sunni Muslim man. A video was taken with a cellular phone of the woman's death. Tina Susman of the *Los Angeles Times* describes the scene as follows:

> Someone slams a concrete block onto the back of her head. A river of blood oozes from beneath her long, tangled hair. The girl stops moving, but the kicks and the rocks keep coming, as do the victorious shouts of the men delivering them.[155]

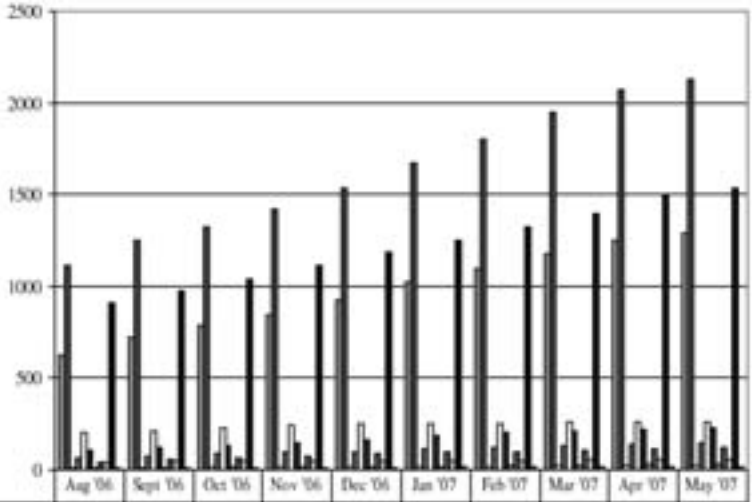


Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, September 11, 2007. Slide 9.

Figure 11.7 Overall Weekly Attack Trends in Iraq: October 2004 to September 2007

Kurds who include Yazidis have accused Sunni Arabs of circulating these images to undermine the Kurdish and Yazidi community. Two weeks after the stoning, more than 20 Yazidi men were dragged off a bus in Mosul by gunmen and executed. The next day, Kurdish political offices were the target of a car bombing in northern Iraq. The attack was claimed by a Sunni insurgent group linked to al-Qa'ida, claiming to avenge the death of the young Yazidi woman.[156] Tensions between Arab Muslims and Yazidis in Mosul had been rising over the course of the war, but most involved individual cases of mixed marriages and tribal rivalries.[157]

An attack against a minority ethnic group in Mosul further heightened tensions in the northern city. On April 22, 2007, gunmen stopped a bus full of workers returning home from a Mosul textile factory. The gunmen checked the passengers' identifications, then drove them to an isolated area and shot 23 of them to death. It was unclear how many passengers were on the bus, but the 23 who were killed were from the minority Yazidi ethnic group. On May 9, a suicide truck bomber killed 14 people and wounded 87 when he blew up his payload near the Kurdish Regional Government's Interior Ministry in Arbil. And on May 13, 50 people were killed and 70 were wounded when a suicide truck bomb exploded near the local office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Makhmour, near Arbil.



	Aug '06	Sept '06	Oct '06	Nov '06	Dec '06	Jan '07	Feb '07	Mar '07	Apr '07	May '07
IED Found	625	720	791	847	929	1022	1095	1181	1252	1289
IED Attack	1111	1247	1326	1424	1536	1671	1806	1949	2072	2127
VBIED Found	11	12	13	13	16	16	18	22	23	23
VBIED Attack	63	73	87	96	101	111	123	132	140	145
IDF	205	213	229	240	248	253	255	260	262	263
IDF Mortar	105	119	131	143	160	188	200	210	220	227
IDF Rocket	9	11	15	16	17	18	22	23	29	31
RPG Attack	44	53	68	77	87	95	100	108	116	119
Grenade	42	45	45	45	46	49	50	55	58	59
SAF Attack	913	978	1040	1113	1188	1253	1319	1399	1492	1535
Suicide Bomber	7	9	10	12	12	13	14	15	15	15

Source: Material adapted from information provided Hans Fah, a security and intelligence consultant working in support of private sector reconstruction programs in Iraq. Data have been drawn from both open source and on the ground protective security networks. Personal correspondence from the author, May 15, 2007. Used with permission. Not official U.S. government data.

Figure 11.8 Cumulative Summary of Attacks in Mosul through May 2007

Christians have also been targeted in northern Iraq. Al-Qa'ida presented Christians in Baghdad with ultimatums to convert to Islam, marry their daughters to al-Qa'ida fighters, pay the Islamic tax, or leave without their possessions.[158] The U.S. military said it became aware of the problem in May and built barriers around the largest Christian enclave in the Dora neighborhood in Baghdad.[159]

Approximately 19,000 Iraqi Christians registered with the United Nations refugee agency in Damascus.[160] On June 4, gunmen killed a Catholic priest and three assistants in Mosul.[161] In Mosul, eight Christian students and their professors were kidnapped on June 20.[162] On June 5, a Catholic priest and five boys were abducted.[163]

THE TRIBAL AWAKENING AND PROGRESS IN AL-ANBAR PROVINCE

In contrast to some other areas, the trends in al-Anbar showed great progress. This progress was not part of the original plan or expected in shaping the president's new strategy. Some U.S. officers had virtually written off the province in 2006, and the surge called for deployments that were designed to contain the insurgency, rather than win, in Anbar and the area covered by MNF-I West. In his January 10, 2007, speech, President Bush announced that 4,000 additional U.S. troops would be sent to al-Anbar Province.[164]

In fact, during the first part of 2007, there was little indication that the patterns of violence would suddenly reverse themselves. The initial fighting in Ramadi was severe. One Iraqi Army member working with U.S. forces in Ramadi said that the number of IEDs in the city made it seem like a "flower garden" of bombs. The insurgents had been driven out of their main strongholds in the city, but they still fired shots and mortar rounds at U.S. and Iraqi forces on a daily basis.[165] For example, on March 18, 2007, police found the decapitated bodies of nine Ramadi policemen with their hands bound and bearing signs of torture.

Haditha in northwestern al-Anbar was another major problem area. One assessment said the following of the town: "Haditha is like a police state, surrounded by a dirt berm topped with concertina wire with two tightly controlled entrances and no private cars permitted to drive in the town proper." The berms were parts of a U.S. operation called "al Majid," which U.S. forces said emphasized the "hold" portion of "clear, hold, and build" counterinsurgency operations.

This emphasis on "win and hold" had to be extremely selective because the number of U.S. and Iraqi troops was so small relative to the area to be covered, but reflected an important improvement in U.S. tactics. In years past, Marines had kicked down doors at night and arrested large numbers of the adult male population. In 2007, however, the operation in Haditha included using human intelligence against known insurgents and providing security for the population without using scare tactics. Haditha, however, had a long way to go before the political and economic aspects of counterinsurgency operations could truly take hold.[166]

General Petraeus described the situation as follows:

> Anbar is an intriguing location right now. Where I was—again, "taken aback" was my word for what I saw in parts of Baghdad. I was heartened by what I saw in Ramadi, by what I've heard described about in Hit, where again Anbaris, the members of those tribes, have said, enough, and have banded together, raised their hand, joined the police forces and in fact are standing and fighting against al Qa'ida Iraq. And you can start to see, by the way, for what it's worth, an identity emerging among them that is, again, very heartening to someone who has been here since the beginning off and on and watched things go up and down in Anbar province—frankly, mostly down during a variety of periods. So that's, again, a very, very interesting development in that regard.[167]

The key factor that drove events in Anbar and the west, however, had nothing to do with U.S. and Iraqi strategy and tactics. During the late winter and early spring of 2007, the Sunni tribes rose up against al-Qa'ida and shifted from attacking U.S. and ISF units to working with them. They rose up because al-Qa'ida and its associated Sunni Islamist extremist movements attacked tribal leaders and other figures who would not follow their dictates, forced young men to join their forces, attempted a systematic process of extortion, tired to use forced marriages to ensure local support, and forced their approach to extreme puritanical Islamic practices. The Coalition had covertly been attempting to win local tribal support for years, but it was al-Qa'ida's actions that drove the local population to armed resistance.

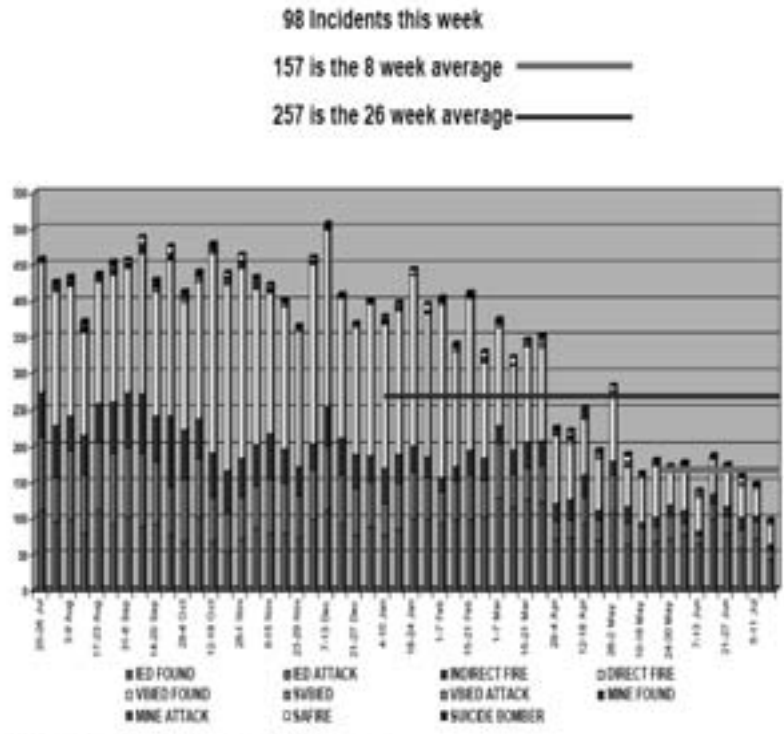
The scale of such resistance became fully clear only in the late spring. Gen. James T. Conway, the commanding Marine general in al-Anbar, did say that there were new prospects for success in early April 2007. It was unclear how many of the 4,000 surge Marines had arrived in the western province, but Conway said that the number of attacks was down and the situation was improving.[168] By summer 2007, it was clear that security had drastically improved in much of the province, and this trend continued through September 2007. The decline in attacks can be seen in Figure 11.9.

Many of the most troubled cities in al-Anbar became far less hostile to the Coalition, and tribal leaders and forces began to work with U.S. forces. Insurgent attacks continued in Ramadi in May 2007, but at far lower numbers than a year earlier. For example, on May 7 two suicide car bombs killed 25 people and dozens more were wounded. The U.S. military also now attributed almost all of the attacks to al-Qa'ida in Iraq, and local Sunnis were denouncing them rather than praising them. A member of the Sunni tribal alliance in al-Anbar said, "This is a cowardly attack, and they will not succeed in destabilizing the situation in the city."[169]

These shifts also occurred in Fallujah. On May 24, 2007, masked gunmen assassinated Allawi al-Issawi, a member of the "Anbar Salvation Front" in Fallujah. The same day, a suicide bomber killed at least 27 Iraqis who were gathered for a funeral procession outside of al-Issawi's home.[170] On May 31, a suicide bomber killed 20 people and wounded at least 20 more. A summary of attacks from June 2006 through May 2007 in Fallujah is shown below in Figure 11.10. As in Baghdad, insurgent attacks using most types of weapons increased over the course of this period.

The June 2007 edition of the "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report described the changes in al-Anbar as follows:

> AQI remains the primary threat to the security environment in Anbar Province, where it continues to target local ISF through use of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), suicide attacks, assassinations, and hit-and-run attacks to subvert and undermine governmental institutions. There are some early signs that are encouraging, as Sunni tribal resistance to AQI along the Euphrates River Valley has grown, and combined with a robust ISF and Coalition presence in Fallujah and Ramadi, has begun to hinder AQI operations. However, local Sunni cooperation with and support to Coalition forces in Anbar Province is not uniform. Moreover, the Iraqi public in Western Iraq is



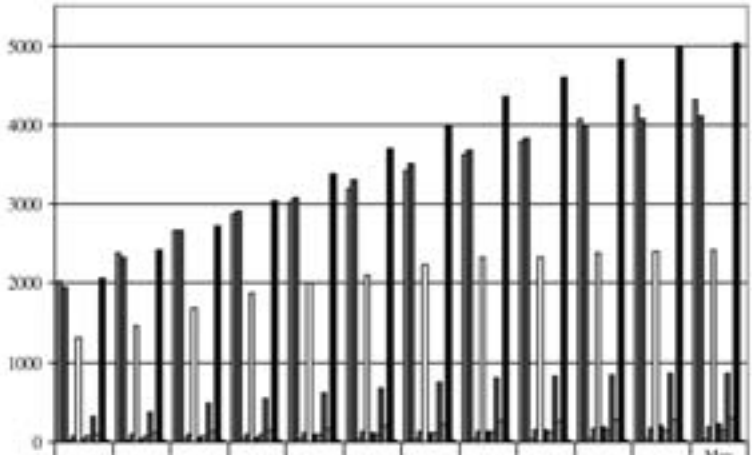
*Note: Figures accurate as of July, 2007.

Source: MNF-W Intelligence briefing, July, 2007. pg. 9.

Figure 11.9 Weekly Incident Totals for Anbar Province*

increasingly willing to provide intelligence and report weapons caches. As part of the increase in force levels, 4,000 additional Marines are currently deploying into Anbar Province. These additional Marines, in conjunction with an expansion of the ISF, and aided by increasing tribal resistance to AQI, are pushing AQI out of many of the population centers, facilitating stability in large parts of the province. Although tribal resistance to AQI is a positive development in Anbar, insurgent groups continue to attack Coalition and ISF targets in other areas in western Iraq, excluding Anbar.

The recent success of tribal engagement in Anbar Province is primarily driven by a concerted campaign of widespread contact with the Anbar tribes ranging from the Syrian border to Baghdad. The Sahawa al- Iraqi (SAI), formerly known as Sahawa al-Anbar, an anti-AQI tribal movement led by 41-year-old Sheikh Abdul Sattar Bezea Fitikhan al-Rishawi, claims 24 tribes as organizational members. Primarily Ramadicentric, SAI is representative of the capabilities of tribal alliances to assist the Coalition in fighting AQI and other resistance elements. Though notable for its contributions to fighting AQI, the SAI is not alone in tribal efforts to eradicate AQI. Large and influential tribes, such as the Albu Mahal, Albu Nimr, and Albu Issa, have also actively opposed AQI.[171]



	Jun '06	Jul '06	Aug '06	Sept '06	Oct '06	Nov '06	Dec '06	Jan '07	Feb '07	Mar '07	Apr '07	May '07
IED Found	2035	2391	2665	2876	3029	3186	3422	3617	3796	4069	4233	4321
IED Attack	1956	2330	2664	2909	3087	3295	3515	3682	3833	3993	4065	4114
VBIED Found	26	27	30	32	33	33	34	34	35	38	42	43
VBIED Attack	83	92	98	101	117	130	134	139	149	166	178	183
IDF	1307	1462	1685	1883	2007	2109	2228	2319	2332	2376	2409	2421
IDF Mortar	46	46	47	61	91	120	122	131	148	193	211	221
IDF Rocket	80	80	81	85	91	100	113	123	137	142	143	143
RPG Attack	321	374	484	544	621	683	746	803	824	850	856	859
Grenade	97	111	132	146	170	201	224	257	265	275	287	296
SAF Attack	2068	2416	2716	3035	3379	3692	3990	4363	4599	4831	4991	5037
Suicide Bomber	10	13	13	15	16	16	17	19	22	24	24	24

Source: Material adapted from information provided Hans Fah, a security and intelligence consultant working in support of private sector reconstruction programs in Iraq. Data have been drawn from both open source and on the ground protective security networks. Personal correspondence from the author, May 15, 2007. Used with permission. Not official U.S. government data.

Figure 11.10 Cumulative Summary of Attacks in Fallujah through May 2007

Cease-Fires and Local Alliances in al-Anbar

These shifts occurred spontaneously as a reaction to al-Qa'ida extremism and violence and without any link to the surge strategy. They were actions taken by a group of tribal sheiks who began to form a tribal association in late 2006.[172] By May 2007, all 23 of the major tribes in and around Ramadi had joined the "Anbar Salvation Front," which was also called the "Anbar Salvation Council" and "Anbar Awakening."[173] This front was led by Sheik Abdul Sattar Buzaigh al-Rishawi.

Forced marriages in particular played an important role in pushing the Sunni tribes into fighting al-Qa'ida. According to Dave Kilcullen, marrying leaders into prominent local families is one of al-Qa'ida's "standard techniques, which I have seen

them apply in places as diverse as Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Indonesia."[174] The marriages helped to cement al-Qa'ida's relationship with locals, adding kinship ties to the religious and ideological appeals of the group.

However, this technique was not acceptable to most Iraqi tribes. Iraqi tribes usually marry within their tribe, and only on rare occasions are women married into other tribes or clans, usually to cement an alliance or to resolve a grievance. According to Kilcullen, "marrying women to strangers, let alone foreigners [most of al-Qa'ida's senior leadership is not Iraqi] is just not done."[175]

The refusal of al-Qa'ida's demands for marriage led to violence. In one instance, al-Qa'ida killed a sheik for refusing to hand over his daughter for marriage. When his people then attacked al-Qa'ida in response, al-Qa'ida brutally retaliated, "killing the children of a Sheik in a particularly gruesome manner."[176] Al-Qa'ida's demands for marriages, and the ensuing violence, may have been the final straw that broke the alliance between the Sunni tribes and al-Qa'ida.

Other issues shaped the decision of many tribes and the main tribal confederation in the region to turn against al-Qa'ida. Al-Qa'ida shut down, disrupted, or attempted to co-opt many tribal smuggling, import/export, and construction businesses. Another factor may have been the perception among many of the tribes that al-Qa'ida was colluding with Iran.[177]

Army Col. Sean MacFarland, of the I Marine Expeditionary Force commanded by Maj. Gen. Richard Zilmer, described the process of forming an alliance with the Sunni tribal leaders in al-Anbar to combat al-Qa'ida forces as a "chemical reaction" needing "two compatible ingredients and a catalyst. . . The two ingredients were some frustrated sheikhs who were frozen out of the provincial government due to a bad decision to boycott the first elections and a new brigade combat team in town." The "catalyst" he described was a rise in al-Qa'ida attacks.

The results, he said, "could not have been more dramatic. When a tribe 'flipped' [referring to its decision to align with U.S. forces], attacks on US soldiers and Marines in that area dropped to zero almost immediately."[178] MacFarland said the lessons for U.S. forces are twofold. One, "there are local solutions to be had if we are willing to look for them"; and two, "Our avowed enemy, al-Qa'ida, is beatable in Iraq."[179]

These developments led U.S. military officers to make major new efforts to work with Sunni tribal forces in al-Anbar, recruiting Sunni Arab nationalists into security forces, initiating local agreements among neighborhoods of rival groups, and establishing businesses in newly stabilized areas. A senior military official in Baghdad described such efforts as follows: "Some of it will be infrastructure that is being worked, some of it is local security for neighborhoods, and some of it is markets reopening."[180]

Once the first sets of the tribal leaders agreed to work with the U.S. "occupation" in the fall of 2006, the number of police recruits began increasing exponentially. The number of volunteers was so great that the United States had problems in dealing with the flow. New policemen were pushed through the training program and ended up patrolling the streets for several weeks without uniforms or issued weaponry.

Some U.S. troops also questioned whether the recruits had been properly vetted and worried about insurgent infiltration.[181]

Colonel MacFarland said that police recruitment had increased sharply after the United States agreed to let them serve in their own tribal areas, protecting their families. MacFarland was instrumental in creating the alliance of tribal leaders in al-Anbar Province in the latter half of 2006 that agreed to work with the Americans to fight the insurgency. He said, "The prize in the counterinsurgency fight is not terrain. It's the people. When you've secured the people, you have won the war. The sheiks lead the people." The tribal association had grown to 200 members by February 2007 and was planning on forming a political party. In the process of securing Ramadi, MacFarland's brigade lost 95 soldiers and 600 were wounded.[182]

In the first six months of 2007, 12,000 Iraqis volunteered for the Iraqi security forces in al-Anbar, compared to 1,000 who volunteered in 2006.[183] A police officer in al-Anbar commented on local members of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, saying, "They are rapidly losing ground in Anbar and have been pushed out gradually, now there are only a few elements remaining, mostly in Fallujah."[184] The deputy commanding general of the II Marine Expeditionary Force in al-Anbar, Gen. John R. Allen, described the province as "a laboratory for counterinsurgency." The number of attacks dropped two-thirds from the previous figure of 500 a week. Discoveries of weapons caches have risen nearly 190 percent, due primarily to the sympathy of local residents. The local police force rose from 20 recruits to 8,000 in the past year.[185]

The continuing decline in violence was equally striking. There was a 50-percent drop in violence after local tribes joined U.S. and Iraqi forces in combating al-Qa'ida. Attacks in March 2007 averaged four a day, compared with 25 a day the previous summer. U.S. forces stationed in the majority Sunni province said that the change was a result of a majority of tribes working with rather than against U.S. forces. In May, there were 400 incidents of violence, compared to the 810 incidents that occurred in May 2006. The average weekly rate of attacks in al-Anbar dropped from about 250 in May 2006 to 100 in May 2007.

There were only 30 attacks in Ramadi, compared to the 254 attacks in May 2006.[186] This downturn in violence in Ramadi was a result of a sustained military presence. In the spring of 2007 there were 6,000 U.S. troops, 4,000 Iraqi soldiers, 4,500 Iraqi policemen, and 65 police stations and joint combat outposts. The offensive in Ramadi was now in the "holding" phase, and history showed that the insurgency was quick to take advantage of any reduction in U.S. forces.[187]

The tribal awakening also reduced the pressure on U.S. forces. In al Qaim, a farming community along the Syrian border, Marines reported a shift in strategy in late May, in correlation with the broader Coalition strategic changes that took place since the end of 2005. Marines became responsible for policing operations rather than "hunt and destroy" missions. Capt. Luke Gove, the company commander, reported that the key choice he must make is when to "not act—which is the hardest thing for a Marine to do." Foreign jihadists in al Qaim threatened the Sunni tribal leaders, and American forces have since used that distrust to recruit Iraqi Army and police

personnel. The goal of the Marine company was to create a local security force, acceptable to residents of al Qaim.[188]

U.S. troops allowed local sheiks to do background checks on the new police recruits because they did not want to appear to be taking a stance on whether to grant or deny amnesty to former insurgents. Col. John Charlton explained, "Some police could've been insurgents at this time last year. But the sheiks have changed their fundamental understanding of who the threat is—and the threat is Al Qa'ida."[189]

Problems in Sustaining the Tribal Awakening

These developments were so promising that the United States immediately sought to expand the tribal awakening beyond the boundaries of al-Anbar. It did, however, have obvious limits and risks. Some of the conditions needed to sustain it were missing. Basic services were still limited, unemployment was high, local governments existed in name only, and, most importantly, it was far from clear that an alliance with U.S. forces to fight insurgents would translate into support for the central government in Baghdad.

Most Sunnis continued to feel alienated by and underrepresented in the Shi'ite-led government. Col. John Charlton, commander of U.S. troops in central al-Anbar, warned that political trouble would be caused if reconstruction were not enacted in the area promptly. Charlton said, "They want electricity back. They want things fixed now. The question is, can the government step up and deliver the goods?"[190] Sheikh Ahmed Abu Rica of al-Anbar Province reported that "central-government support is taking forever" to reach the people of Ramadi.[191]

Tribal rivalry was also a problem. On June 14 it was reported that the Anbar Salvation Council was splitting apart, as some of its leaders were establishing a new group. The leaders who were defecting apparently were not from the area. They criticized the Council for relying too heavily on Americans and that some of its leaders were using the Council for personal and political gains.[192]

Al-Qa'ida also responded with attacks that targeted the leaders of the alliance. On May 31, a suicide bomb exploded in Ramadi, killing five people, including three policemen. A second suicide bomber on the same day exploded at a police recruitment center in Fallujah, killing one and injuring eight people.[193]

On June 26, a suicide bomber attacked the Mansour Melia Hotel in Baghdad, where the tribal sheikhs of the Anbar Salvation Council were meeting. The blast killed 12 people, including four Sunni sheikhs, a popular TV correspondent and poet, Rahim al-Maliki, and Aziz Yasiri, a former army general under Saddam Hussein who worked with the American military and recently joined the opposition to the Maliki government.[194] These suicide attacks were part of a continuing series of attacks on the tribal sheiks leading local forces against al-Qa'ida.

In a major success for al-Qa'ida, Sheik Abdul Sattar Buzaigh al-Rishawi was killed by a bomb near his house on September 13, 2007. This was a major blow to the Anbar Salvation Council, as al-Rishawi had become an increasingly prominent figurehead, meeting with President Bush in al-Anbar Province only a week before

his death. As of late September, the reaction to his death remained unclear, but al-Qa'ida in Iraq did demonstrate it was able to carry out a new campaign of killings and assassinations of tribal leaders and local officials during that month. AQI may have suffered serious reversals in Anbar, but it still had substantial forces and operating areas outside the major cities and river region.

Trying to Build on the "Anbar Model"

On May 30, the U.S. military announced it was planning to initiate cease-fire agreements with Iraqi insurgents in and around Baghdad.[195] Lieutenant General Odierno stated, "We believe a large majority of groups within Iraq are reconcilable and are now interested in engaging with us. But more importantly, they want to engage and become a part of the government of Iraq."[196] He said that, as part of the U.S. military push to generate political reconciliation, he gave U.S. commanders the authority to pursue such agreements locally with insurgents that have tried to attack U.S. and Iraqi forces.[197]

Odierno also said, "There are insurgents reaching out to us . . . so we want to reach back to them. We're talking about cease-fires and maybe signing some things that say they won't conduct operations against the government of Iraq or against coalition forces."[198] He said that he believed 80 percent of insurgent groups in Iraq were "reconcilable," including Sunni insurgents, Shi'ite militia such as the Mahdi Army, and possibly a few groups affiliated with al-Qa'ida in Iraq.[199]

However, Odierno cautioned that the process of local reconciliation would be slow.[200] U.S. military leaders pursued talks with Moqtada al-Sadr both directly and through the Iraqi government. Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno said, "He has a grassroots movement that he's always going to have; we have to recognize that . . . We're trying to talk to him. We want to talk to him." Odierno was unsure of the significance of al-Sadr's resurfacing, whether it would be positive or negative for U.S. troops.[201]

Ambassador Ryan Crocker announced on June 3 that the United States was asking the Iraqi government to grant amnesty to insurgents who have fought in Iraq, in an effort to consolidate forces against al-Qa'ida in Iraq. "As a part of a political reconciliation process, amnesty can be very important . . . It can also be important in this particular context as we seek to draw as many elements as we can away from the fight . . . against us and into the fight against a common enemy, al Qa'ida."[202]

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani confirmed that the Iraqi government was negotiating with members of the "national resistance" and was similarly prepared to give amnesty to those elements. "Then only al Qa'ida will remain as the main criminal terrorist group, and it will be easy to eradicate it," Talabani said. Mr. Talabani was optimistic about getting Moqtada al-Sadr to negotiate with the Iraqi government, saying al-Sadr's movement "announce[d] that they will . . . support political process, very peaceful, and he asked his followers not to fight against Iraqi soldiers."

As these events took place, commanders tested the "Anbar model" across areas that are Sunni dominated, including parts of Baghdad, particularly Amiriyah; the area

south of the capital of Babil, known as the Triangle of Death; Diyala Province, north and east of Baghdad; and Salahuddin Province.[203] Approximately 2,000 people unaffiliated with the Iraqi security forces were working with American troops at checkpoints and gun positions in the Abu Ghraib area, west of Baghdad.[204]

U.S. commanders held talks with Sunni groups in at least four insurgent strongholds in central and north-central Iraq. If local leaders cooperated, the deals brought members of a tribe or sect into the security forces, providing them with armored vehicles and weapons. However, if local cooperation was not found, military forces conducted neighborhood sweeps, raided homes, and sought out insurgents.[205]

U.S. field commanders met in June with General Petraeus in Baghdad and formally discussed the conditions Sunni groups would have to meet in order to be considered for U.S. support. The conditions included requiring that fighters have biometric tests to confirm their identities through retinal scans and fingerprinting, and registering the serial numbers of all weapons.[206]

Sunni groups that declared they supported the central government were provided with arms, ammunition, funding, supplies, and fuel by Iraqi military units allied with Americans. In some areas Sunni groups agreed to alert U.S. troops to the location of IEDs and other booby traps. Referring to the fact that the United States had supplied and funded a predominately Shi'ite security force, and was now doing the same for Sunni groups, American officers said this policy could result in the arming of two sides in a civil war. Without signs of reconciliation between Sunnis and Shi'ites in the near future, there is a risk that weapons given to Sunni groups could be used against Shi'ites.[207]

Many of the Sunni groups that declared their support for the government and worked with U.S. troops, however, were anything but loyal to the central authorities and many Shi'ites reacted with deep distrust. Abu Ibrahim, a former colonel in the Iraqi Army who had left the insurgency and the Islamic State of Iraq, said,

> Our ultimate objective is to reach a compromise with the occupation, which we recognize, as opposed to the so-called Iraqi government, which we don't want to do anything with. Once we reach an agreement with the occupation and a timetable for their withdrawal, we will organize a national conference of the resistance in order to decide the future of Iraq.[208]

Shi'ite political leaders were suspicious of the new practice of arming Sunni groups that they felt sought a return to Sunni dominance.[209] "The government's aim is to disarm and demobilize the militias in Iraq,' said Sadiq al-Rikabi, a political adviser to Mr. Maliki. "And we have enough militias in Iraq that we are struggling now to solve the problem. Why are we creating new ones?"[210] By agreeing to arm Sunni groups, the United States had in effect relinquished the initial demand to disarm Shi'ite militias.[211]

Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, commander of the 3rd Infantry Division south of Baghdad, said that enmity toward Americans and Shi'ites is not a secret among many Sunni allies in the area. "They say, 'We hate you because you are occupiers'" he said,

"'but we hate Al Qa'ida worse, and we hate the Persians even more (referring to Shiites).'"[212] But, even commanders who were suspicious of this practice said that potential gains against al-Qa'ida were worth the risks that come with arming Sunni groups.[213]

Diyala

American military officials said they were negotiating with local tribal leaders in Diyala in early June. "Within the last three or four months we've seen a much greater interest in tribal reconciliation and we've seen a shift in tribal attitudes," said Maj. Tim Brooks, a staff officer of the Army brigade in Diyala.[214] The rise in violence in Diyala was due to the fact that American troops were entering areas they had not previously held, which were often insurgent strongholds.[215]

U.S. commanders worked with tribal leaders in Diyala for several years, but in the spring of 2007, the stakes rose as the province became more violent. U.S. military deaths in Diyala have increased since January 2007. In May, 126 U.S. troops died in Iraq, including 21 in Diyala. Diyala was then the second most deadly province, other than Baghdad.[216]

Analysts noted that Diyala is different from al-Anbar in that it is mixed with Sunnis and Shi'ites, with about 25 major tribes and more than 100 minor groups or offshoots. Al-Anbar is almost entirely Sunni, with a few dominant tribal leaders.[217]

Maysan

Lt. Col. Dale Kuehl, commander of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 1st Infantry Division in Amiriyah, granted the militiamen the power of arrest, allowed the Iraqi Army to supply them with ammunition, and fought with them against al-Qa'ida in Iraq. The process of alignment signified a new American military strategy of looking beyond Iraqi security forces for assistance in securing neighborhoods.[218]

The group, which called itself the Baghdad Patriots, killed about 10 suspected al-Qa'ida members and detained 15, compared to the sparse progress made by Iraqi and U.S. forces in the previous six months.

On June 5, the Islamic Army in Iraq said that it reached a cease-fire agreement with al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia after the two groups clashed in Amariyah in late May. The two groups had clashed in Amiriyah, killing 30 fighters.[219] The groups claimed they did not want to spill Muslim blood or deter the "project of jihad." The Islamic Army is predominately Sunni, made mostly of fighters who disbanded from the army of Saddam Hussein. They said they rose up against al-Qa'ida in Iraq because it was too religious, imposing rules on the neighborhood, and killing fellow Sunnis without provocation or reason.[220]

The Islamic Army said the groups agreed to stop all operations against one another, stop criticizing each other publicly, and stop taking prisoners. The groups planned to create a "judicial committee" to resolve their differences.[221]

However, many U.S. officers were wary that the long-term agenda of the Baghdad Patriots is unknown and that the alignment developed out of the desperation of U.S. troops. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki declared that no groups aside from the Iraqi and American security forces should possess weapons. Some feel that arming the Sunni militia could deliver negative consequences in the future if the group turns on the United States.[222]

Members of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment recalled the quick process of forming an alliance with the Baghdad Patriots in an article written by Joshua Partlow, published in the *Washington Post* on June 9:

> It was about 2 A.M. on May 30 when Capt. Andy Wilbraham, a 33-year-old company commander, first heard military chatter on his tank radio about rumors that local gunmen would take on al-Qa'ida. Later that morning, a noncommissioned officer turned to him with the news: "They're uprising."
>
> "It was just a shock it happened so fast," Wilbraham said.
>
> By noon, loudspeakers in mosques throughout Amiriyah were broadcasting a call to war: "It is time to stand up and fight" al-Qa'ida. Groups of men, some in black ski masks carrying AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades descended on the area around the Maluki mosque, a suspected al-Qa'ida in Iraq base of operations, and launched an attack. For the most part, Kuehl's soldiers stood back, trying to contain the violence and secure other mosques, and let the gunmen do their work.
>
> The next day, a Thursday, al-Qa'ida counterattacked. Using machine guns and grenades, its fighters drove the militiamen south across several city blocks until they were holed up in the Firdas mosque, soldiers said. "I was getting reports every 10 minutes from one of the imams: 'They're at this point. We're surrounded. We're getting attacked. They're at the mosque,'" Kuehl recalled. He dispatched Stryker attack vehicles to protect the militiamen.
>
> "We basically pushed that one back just by force," said Capt. Kevin Salge, 31, who led the Stryker team of about 60 men to the mosque. "We got in there. Our guns are much bigger guns. Then freedom fighters, Baghdad Patriot guys, started firing."
>
> Spec. Chadrick Domino, 23, was with a Stryker unit that drove north of the mosque to set up a perimeter to prevent others from joining the fight. About noon, he was the first member of his team to walk into a residential courtyard. He may not have had time to see the machine gunner who killed him.
>
> By afternoon, the Americans had secured the Firdas mosque and were helping treat the wounded who lay in the courtyard. Kuehl drove out from his headquarters to meet with the leaders of the militiamen and work out the terms that would guide their collaboration in coming days. Kuehl agreed to help if the militiamen did not torture their captives or kill people who were not affiliated with al-Qa'ida in Iraq. The militiamen agreed to hold prisoners for no more than 24 hours before releasing them or handing them over to the Americans. They in turn wanted the Americans not to interfere and to provide weapons.
>
> "We need them and they need us," Kuehl said. "Al-Qa'ida's stronger than them. We provide capabilities that they don't have. And the locals know who belongs and who doesn't. It doesn't matter how long we're here, I'll never know. And we'll never fit in."[223]

The American troops complained that the fighters on both sides looked identical, wearing similar sweat suits and carrying the same kind of guns. They initially asked their allies to wear white headbands and ride in Strykers. However, al-Qa'ida members began wearing the white headbands, and it was difficult for the allied fighters to maintain their orientation in the Stryker vehicles. Eventually, the fighters were issued reflective armbands and allowed to ride in Humvees instead. The fighters were also supplied with plastic flex cuffs for making arrests and red and green flares to signal if they were in trouble or when they have completed a raid.[224]

After the first successful raid turned up an arms cache, the American troops were faced with the question of whether or not to assist in arming the fighters.[225]

> On June 1, a Friday, the fighters directed the soldiers to a large weapons cache. Sniper rifles, Russian machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and thousands of rounds of ammunition were stashed in a secret room, accessible only by removing a circuit-breaker box and crawling through a hole. While the Americans were tallying the haul, an explosive detonated outside, wounding several soldiers, including one whose feet were blown off. In return for their services, the militiamen had one request: Give us the weapons in the cache. "Who are these guys really?" Salge remembered worrying. He told them to talk to the battalion commander.[226]

Kuehl said he would most likely supply the militiamen with weapons in limited amounts. The fighters gave the Americans their fingerprints, addresses, and retinal scans.[227]

When the Baghdad Patriots and al-Qa'ida in Iraq forces arrived at a cease-fire agreement on June 6, the American tank unit planned with the allied militiamen to carry out arrest raids against al-Qa'ida, but the militiamen called off the raid. The tank driver, Spec. Estevan Altamirano, 25, was skeptical about the intentions of the Baghdad Patriots. "Pretty soon they run out of al-Qa'ida, and then they're going to turn on us," he said. "I don't want to get used to them and then I have an AK behind my back. I'm not going to trust them at all."[228]

This progress can be illustrated by examining the broader trend in the discovery of arms caches. This trend is shown in Figure 11.11.

Figure 11.11 Trend in Arms Caches Found and Cleared: 2004–September 7, 2007

Year	Anbar	Iraq
2004	692	2,691
2005	1,483	3,091
2006	1,222	2,726
January 1–September 7, 2007	2,111	4,409

Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, September 11, 2007. Slide 6.

Progress as of September 2007

Like progress in Baghdad and in Diyala, the level of progress in al-Anbar was a key focus of reporting to Congress in September 2007. The main controversy, however, was over the ability to sustain and expand such progress without more central government support, and without broad political accommodation or conciliation. It was clear that there was still serious al-Qa'ida activity in al-Anbar, but it was also clear that most tribes now worked with the United States and the more populated areas of the province were far more peaceful.

General Petraeus described the situation as follows in his September 10, 2007, report to Congress:

> [I]n what may be the most significant development of the past 8 months, the tribal rejection of Al Qaeda that started in Anbar Province and helped produce such significant change there has now spread to a number of other locations as well.
>
> . . .Based on all this and on the further progress we believe we can achieve over the next few months, I believe that we will be able to reduce our forces to the pre-surge level of brigade combat teams by next summer without jeopardizing the security gains that we have fought so hard to achieve.
>
> Beyond that, while noting that the situation in Iraq remains complex, difficult, and sometimes downright frustrating, I also believe that it is possible to achieve our objectives in Iraq over time, though doing so will be neither quick nor easy.
>
> . . .As we have gone on the offensive in former Al Qaeda and insurgent sanctuaries, and as locals have increasingly supported our efforts, we have found a substantially increased number of arms, ammunition, and explosives caches. . .we have, so far this year, already found and cleared over 4,400 caches, nearly 1,700 more than we discovered in all of last year. This may be a factor in the reduction in the number of overall improvised explosive device attacks in recent months, which as this chart shows, has declined sharply, by about one-third, since June.
>
> The change in the security situation in Anbar Province has, of course, been particularly dramatic. . . .monthly attack levels in Anbar have declined from some 1,350 in October 2006 to a bit over 200 in August of this year. This dramatic decrease reflects the significance of the local rejection of Al Qaeda and the newfound willingness of local Anbaris to volunteer to serve in the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police Service. As I noted earlier, we are seeing similar actions in other locations, as well.
>
> . . .The most significant development in the past six months likely has been the increasing emergence of tribes and local citizens rejecting Al Qaeda and other extremists. This has, of course, been most visible in Anbar Province. A year ago the province was assessed as "lost" politically. Today, it is a model of what happens when local leaders and citizens decide to oppose Al Qaeda and reject its Taliban-like ideology. While Anbar is unique and the model it provides cannot be replicated everywhere in Iraq, it does demonstrate the dramatic change in security that is possible with the support and participation of local citizens. As this chart shows, other tribes have been inspired by the actions of those in Anbar and have volunteered to fight extremists as well. We have, in coordination with the Iraqi government's National Reconciliation Committee, been engaging these tribes and groups of local citizens who want to oppose extremists and to

contribute to local security. Some 20,000 such individuals are already being hired for the Iraqi Police, thousands of others are being assimilated into the Iraqi Army, and thousands more are vying for a spot in Iraq's Security Forces.

. . . To be sure, trends have not been uniformly positive across Iraq, as is shown by this chart depicting violence levels in several key Iraqi provinces. The trend in Ninevah Province, for example, has been much more up and down, until a recent decline, and the same is true in Sala ad Din Province . . .

Our operations have, in fact, produced substantial progress against Al Qaeda and its affiliates in Iraq. As this chart shows, in the past 8 months, we have considerably reduced the areas in which Al Qaeda enjoyed sanctuary. We have also neutralized 5 media cells, detained the senior Iraqi leader of Al Qaeda-Iraq, and killed or captured nearly 100 other key leaders and some 2,500 rank-and-file fighters.

Al Qaeda is certainly not defeated; however, it is off balance and we are pursuing its leaders and operators aggressively. Of note, as the recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq explained, these gains against Al Qaeda are a result of the synergy of actions by: conventional forces to deny the terrorists sanctuary; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to find the enemy; and special operations elements to conduct targeted raids. A combination of these assets is necessary to prevent the creation of a terrorist safe haven in Iraq.[229]

The White House report to Congress on progress in meeting congressional benchmarks, which was also issued in September, stated,

Tribal-based anti-terrorist initiatives have also augmented Coalition efforts to combat al-Qa'ida. Coalition efforts to secure the population against al-Qa'ida and other terrorists and extremists in Baghdad and other provinces across Iraq show signs of progress, but much hard work and tough fighting remain. Al-Qa'ida and Iranian-supported extremists groups have not been defeated, though we have made strong progress.

. . . Coalition and Iraqi forces, along with Iraqi tribal elements, have pushed al-Qa'ida out of several former safe havens. Coalition forces have killed or captured nearly 100 key leaders and over 2,500 rank and file al-Qa'ida members in the past 7 months. As a result, al-Qa'ida's ability to coordinate its activities and conduct simultaneous attacks in multiple regions has been reduced. Nonetheless, sporadic high-profile attacks by al-Qa'ida continue to cause high civilian casualties, demonstrating al-Qa'ida's intent to use civilian casualties to provoke additional sectarian violence, shape public opinion, and destabilize the Government of Iraq.

Sunni tribal groups have turned against al-Qa'ida in al-Anbar and Diyala provinces as well as in the Baghdad-area neighborhoods of Ameriyah, Abu Ghraib, Adhamiya, and Arab Jabour. They are cooperating with Coalition and Iraqi forces in expelling al-Qa'ida from their areas. Attacks in al-Anbar are now less than one-quarter the rate in January, and al-Qa'ida's sanctuaries have been greatly reduced. The trend of tribal engagement with the Coalition and the Government of Iraq continues to expand to other areas of Iraq.

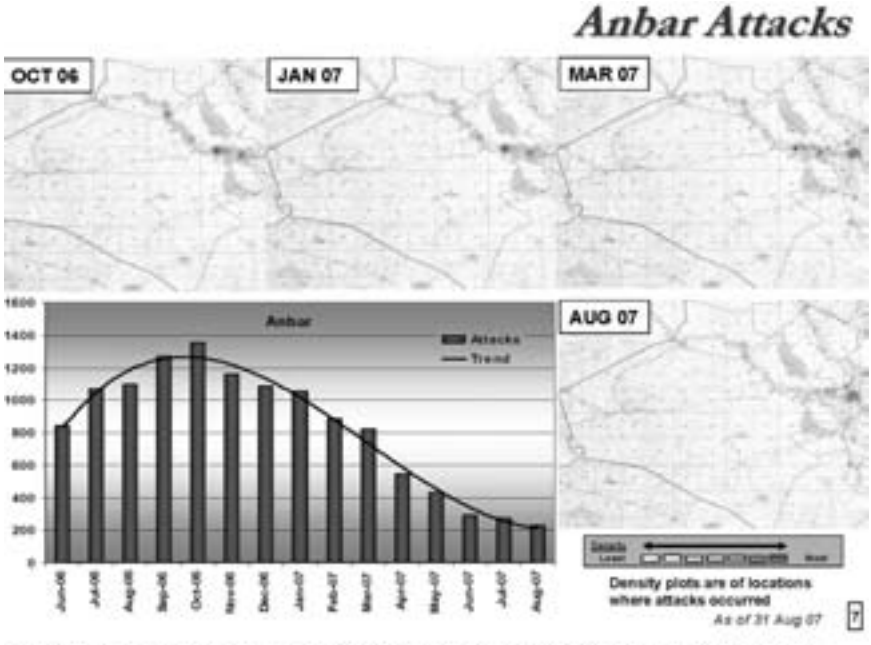
More than 40,000 concerned Iraqi citizens have volunteered to support local security initiatives since the start of the surge—and that number is growing daily. Prime Minister Maliki is personally involved in decisions to reconcile with these Sunni tribes and citizens willing to fight al-Qa'ida. He has directed the Government of Iraq to take steps to

incorporate them into local security forces—a clear demonstration of the potential of "bottom-up" reconciliation that has occurred since January 2007. In fact, Prime Minister Maliki recently approved hiring approximately 12,000 Sunnis in al-Anbar, and 1,735 local men—including former insurgents—in Abu Ghraib. These events illustrate the growing sense among Iraqis that they need to overcome their natural trepidation and make some form of accommodation with former opponents.[230]

Many of the previous figures have already reflected the impact of these developments both in Anbar and nationally. There are, however, several other figures that illustrate the impact of what was happening in Anbar:

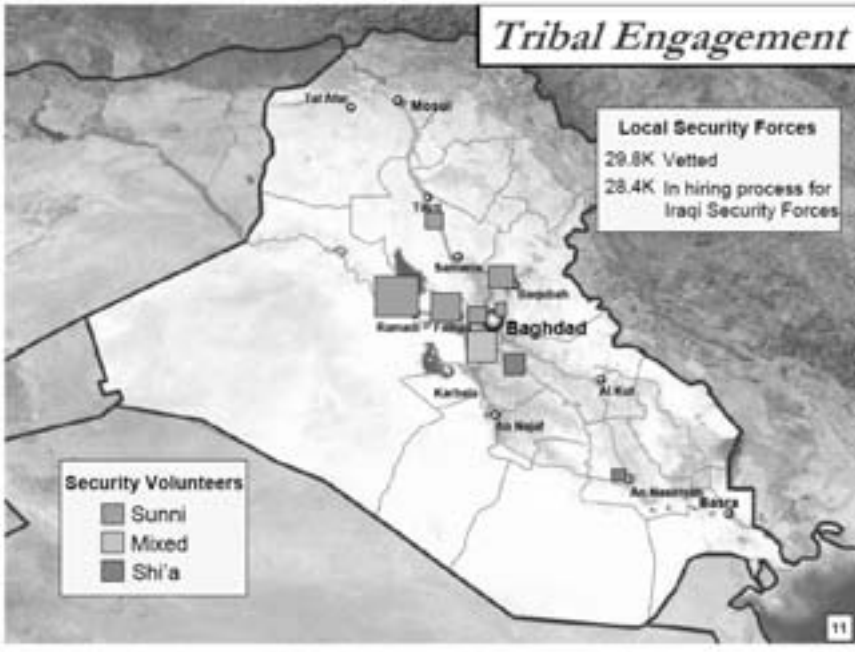
- Figure 11.12 shows how the steadily dropping number of attacks was tied to a drop in violence in the key populated towns in the river areas of Anbar.
- Figure 11.13 shows the emerging centers of tribal and other local anti–al-Qa'ida forces in early September 2007.
- Figure 11.14, however, shows the enduring presence of al-Qa'ida forces in the area.

MNF-I also released its first official estimates of the number of insurgents killed in late September. These figures estimated that 19,329 insurgents had been killed between the fall of Saddam Hussein and September 2007 and that the combination



Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, September 11, 2007, Slide 7.

Figure 11.12 The Drop in Violence in al-Anbar by Area: October 2006 to August 2007

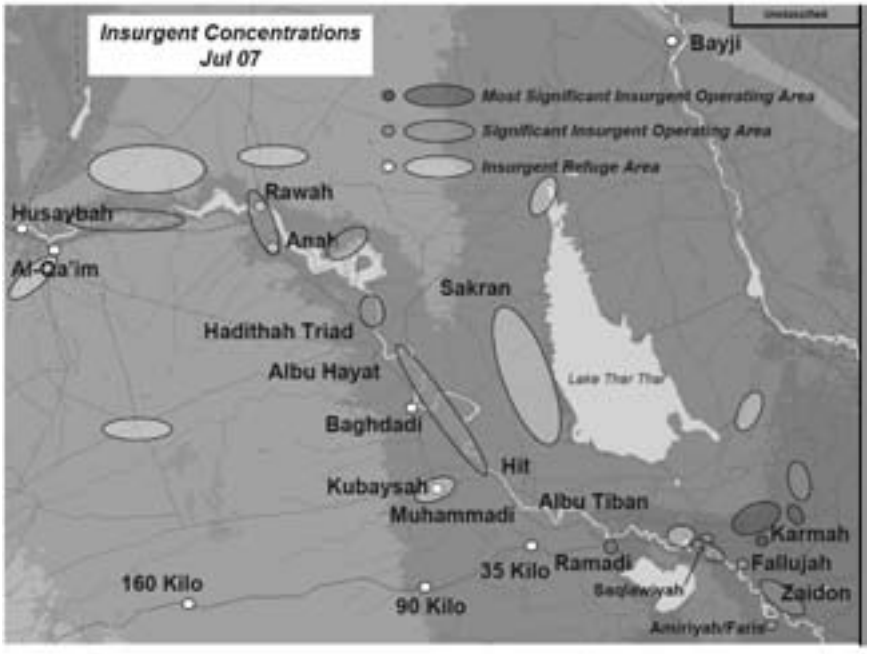


Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, September 11, 2007. Slide 11.

Figure 11.13 Emerging Anti–al-Qa'ida Local Forces

of the "surge" and the tribal awakening was estimated to have killed 4,882 insurgents in the first eight months of 2007, a 25-percent rise over the estimate for all of 2006.[231] MNFG-I estimated that 597 insurgents had been killed in 2003, 6,801 in 2004, 3,247 in 2005, 3,902 in 2006, and 4,882 in 2007. The fighting was not, however, as intense as in some previous years. The most intense month had been August of 2004, during the fighting against the militia of the Moqtada Al-Sadr, when 1,623 insurgents were estimated to have been killed in a single month. Over 1,200 died during the peak month of the fighting in the First Battle of Fallujah in the spring of 2004, and nearly 1,000 were killed during the peak month of the fighting in the Second Battle of Fallujah in the fall of 2004. The combination of the U.S. and Iraqi campaign had actually reduced monthly casualties during the course of 2007, from a peak of nearly 800 per month in December 2006 to 500–700 during the spring, and down to 254 in August 2007.[232]

The caution that must be made about these positive trends is that they remained extremely fragile. There was no real political accommodation of any major form in Iraq, and the tribes turned to the United States for their own advantage and could just as easily change again. The central government did little to win lasting loyalty and did what it did do slowly and largely as a result of U.S. prodding and pressure on the prime minister from other Iraqi leaders. They not only made progress in al-Anbar more difficult, but severely limited the progress that could be made in other



Source: MNF-I West, August 2007

Figure 11.14 Continuing Insurgent Activity in Western Iraq

areas. Moreover, strong al-Qa'ida elements still operated in al-Anbar and the rest of MNF-I West's area of operations. The Tribal Awakening was only a beginning, not an ending.

THE SEARCH FOR IRAQI POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION AND CONCILIATION

Unfortunately, progress in Iraqi political accommodation and conciliation did not match the progress in security and military operations. While progress did take place at the level of the central government, the next chapter shows that far more serious problems took place in terms of growing *de facto* separation in the Kurdish north and the Shi'ite south. Moreover, the lack of progress by the central government cost it a growing amount of popular support throughout Iraq and sharply undermined U.S. popular and congressional support for continuing American aid and military intervention.

Political stalemate and a lack of conciliation continued to drive Iraqi violence and characterize Iraqi politics. The March 2007 Department of Defense (DoD) "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report to Congress noted a change in the way that the United States would support Iraqi political reconciliation. The Pentagon described the difference in the President's "New Way Forward" as follows:

> The new approach adapts to new conditions by emphasizing the precondition of security in advancing meaningful reconciliation and setting realistic and achievable goals that are vital to stabilizing Iraq in the medium and long term. Whereas prior efforts had emphasized an all encompassing "national compact" as the vehicle for political progress, the coming months will seek to advance four specific national reconciliation goals—a hydrocarbon law, local elections, constitutional review, and de-Ba'athification reform—while also focusing more on political accommodations at the provincial and local levels.[233]

The problem was further complicated by weak leadership by Iraq's prime minister, factional and party disputes, and by the fact the central government often acted more in the interest of Shi'ite factions than in the interest of all of Iraq's people. Throughout much of the fall of 2006, al-Maliki had continued to call for a political solution to the security crisis and dissuaded U.S. and Iraqi troops from attacking Mahdi Army members in Sadr City. The Iraqi government, however, found itself under growing pressure to act quickly from both the U.S. government and disheartened Iraqi civilians, who continued to pay the daily price of civil conflict.

The Maliki government publicly supported President Bush in his surge strategy and claimed its goals were to defeat both Sunni and Shi'ite extremists. At the same time, key Shi'ite leaders seemed more focused on seeking Shi'ite dominance in a struggle with Arab Sunnis. Kurdish leaders showed growing concern over Kurdish rights and autonomy, and Sunni leaders who participated in the political process showed more and more fear as they faced a breakdown of conciliation and compromise and future conflict with Shi'ites.

Shi'ite leaders realized that most of the U.S.–led fighting that took place as a result of the surge strategy would be directed against Sunni insurgents. This may help explain why al-Sadr did not immediately oppose a new strategy that at least nominally focused on Shi'ite extremists as much as Sunni insurgents. On January 21, 2006, al-Sadr's 30 deputies and 6 cabinet ministers returned to the government—after a month-long boycott—and he stood down his militia for the surge. His choice in the context of the Bush strategy in Baghdad had the potential to preserve his personal influence in Iraq as well as his loyalists in the militia.

The return of al-Sadr's bloc to parliament also brought attendance in assembly sessions to over 50 percent—the amount needed to pass laws—for the first time in several months. The Iraqi Parliament—with 275 elected members—had had the numbers necessary to pass laws only a handful of times since November 2006; on one occasion as few as 65 members made it to the session. The al-Sadr presence, however, was tenuous and disruptive from Sadr's return in January 2006 until he again withdrew his deputies from the Shi'ite coalition in September 2007, and there were many other pressures that helped block parliamentary action.

Members of parliament said that security was one of the prime reasons for absenteeism—which was widespread across every party and sectarian group. Salaries were paid for 20 security guards, but most lawmakers said that was not sufficient. Iraqi officials said that some elected members were increasingly disillusioned with the

parliamentary process—which had not turned out like they thought it would. Many were also exhausted and frustrated and felt that regardless of how many sessions they attended, their voice did not resonate on Iraqi streets.[234]

Political Failures and U.S. Strategy

Earlier failures in political conciliation and its impact on waning American domestic support were key factors that shaped the changes in U.S. strategy in early 2007. In his speech on the new U.S. strategy in Iraq on January 10, 2007, President Bush stated that Prime Minister al-Maliki had given U.S. and Iraqi forces the "green light" to enter all neighborhoods in Baghdad to end sectarian violence.[235]

President Bush also set forth several specific benchmarks for the Iraqi government:

> To establish its authority, the Iraqi government plans to take responsibility for security in all of Iraq's provinces by November [2007]. To give every Iraqi citizen a share in the country's economy, Iraq will pass legislation to share oil revenues among all Iraqis. To show that it is committed to delivering a better life, the Iraqi government will spend $10 billion of its own money on reconstruction and infrastructure projects that will create new jobs. To empower local leaders, Iraqis plan to hold provincial elections later this year. And to allow more Iraqis to re-enter their nation's political life, the government will reform de-Ba'athification laws, and establish a fair process for considering amendments to Iraq's constitution.[236]

Secretary of Defense Gates emphasized the linkage between a continuing U.S. presence and further Iraqi government actions:

> I think that if we get some indication that the Iraqis are not fulfilling their commitments, the way this is going to unfold—we are going to have a number of opportunities to go back to the Iraqis and point out where they have failed to meet their commitments and to move forward.
>
> I think that, frankly, based on the president's conversations and the conversations that our ambassador and General Casey have had not just with the prime minister but with President Talibani and with other leaders in the Iraqi government that there is a broad commitment in the Iraqi government across several different groups in the government to make this work. So I think our assumption going forward is that they have every intention of making this work, of fulfilling their commitments.
>
> And, frankly, you know, the notion that the Iraqis are standing by while we're doing the fighting is really not an accurate statement. In fact, one of our military folks told me the other day that now more than half of the casualties coming into US military hospitals in Iraq are Iraqi military. So they are fighting, and as we saw in the streets of Baghdad just in the last couple of days, they are fighting. So I think that—our belief is they will fulfill these commitments. But if we see them falling short, we will make sure that they know that and how strongly we feel about it.

In a news briefing in late April 2007, MNF-I Commander Gen. David Petraeus summarized the continuing challenges facing the al-Maliki government as follows:

There are . . . a number of challenges in the area of governance that the embassy and Multinational Force Iraq are helping the Iraqis to address. It is in fact important to recall that the government of Prime Minister Maliki is Iraq's fourth government in as many years. Moreover, it is not a government of national unity. Rather, it is one comprised of political leaders from different parties that often default to narrow agendas and a zero-sum approach to legislation.

That is one reason that progress on key laws has been slow, though there has been some progress. The budget law, the base hydrocarbon law approved by the Council of Ministers, the emergency powers law and so forth have all been noteworthy. And it is in fact just noteworthy to acknowledge, as Ambassador Negroponte did yesterday, just what Iraq has achieved since he served there as the ambassador in 2004, with respect to its elections, its constitution, its government and so forth. I believe Prime Minister Maliki and many other Iraqi leaders are committed to achieving more in this area in the months ahead.

Though its institutions are slowly developing, Iraq still suffers from a lack of the governmental capacity needed to put Iraq's oil revenues to work sufficiently for all its people. In view of this, we are working hard, together with the US embassy again, to help strengthen institutions, doubling the number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, establishing a law and order task force, developing an energy fusion cell, and increasing emphasis on ministerial mentorship.

The U.S. Congress and Political Benchmarks for Iraq

On May 25, 2007, President George W. Bush signed a bill allotting $108 billion to war funds in Iraq and Afghanistan that would pay for military operations in Iraq through September 2007. According to the requirements set by Congress as part of this funding, the disbursement of these funds and the further support for troop deployment to Iraq would be contingent on conditions set for the U.S. military command in Iraq and the president himself.[237]

These conditions required the president to report to Congress on the extent to which the Iraqi government was meeting 18 benchmarks. The first "benchmark" report was issued on July 15, 2007, and had to be almost totally negative. This was a major reason that President Bush warned Prime Minister al-Maliki in repeated phone calls to him in the spring of 2007, saying that Washington expected to see "tangible results quickly" on the oil bill and other legislation in exchange for the continued American support.[238]

The White House emphasized that it was "necessary for Coalition Forces to temporarily play a greater role" so that the government could, in conjunction with Coalition and Iraqi security forces, intensify its efforts against al-Qa'ida and some elements of the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). The briefing stated that the White House planned to continue its commitment through a combination of joining Coalition and Iraqi security forces and embedding transition team personnel within most ISF units.

The Bush Administration Assessment in September 2007

These pressures still, however, had done little more than make Iraq's leaders talk and draft possible legislation by September 2007. On September 13, President Bush released his assessment of Iraqi progress, and it was only marginally more favorable than the one issued in July. The benchmarks, and the Bush administration's assessment of them as of September 14, 2007, are listed below:

(i) Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and then completing the constitutional review.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward forming a Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) and then completing the constitutional review.

(ii) Enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification reform.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification reform.

(iii) Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon resources to the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shi'a Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has not made satisfactory progress toward enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon revenue.

(iv) Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.

(v) Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an Independent High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections.

Assessment: There are multiple components to this benchmark, each deserving its own assessment.

Establishing the IHEC Commission: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward establishing an IHEC Commission.

Elections Law: The Government of Iraq has not made satisfactory progress toward establishing a provincial elections law.

Provincial Council Authorities: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward establishing provincial council authorities, which are encapsulated in the Provincial Powers law.

Provincial Elections Date: The Government of Iraq has not made satisfactory progress toward establishing a date for provincial elections.

(vi) Enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty.

Assessment: No assessment can be made until the necessary preconditions have been reached for implementing a general amnesty.

(vii) Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are accountable only to the central government and loyal to the Constitution of Iraq.

Assessment: No assessment can be made until the necessary preconditions have been reached for implementing a strong militia disarmament program.

(viii) Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad Security Plan.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad Security Plan.

(ix) Providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations.

(x) Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions in consultation with U.S. Commanders, without political intervention to include the authority to pursue all extremists including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions in consultation with U.S. Commanders, to include the authority to pursue all extremists. However, there has not been satisfactory progress towards eliminating political intervention by leaders throughout the chain of command.

(xi) Ensuring that the Iraqi Security Forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress in ensuring that the Iraqi Army is providing even-handed enforcement of the law, though much remains to be done in this area. However the Iraqi Police has not made satisfactory progress, as some elements still act with a sectarian bias.

(xii) Ensuring that, as President Bush quoted Prime Minister Maliki as saying, "the Baghdad Security Plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation."

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward ensuring that the Baghdad Security Plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of their sectarian or political affiliation.

(xiii) Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward reducing sectarian violence. Where ISF and Coalition forces have conducted clear and hold operations, militia control has been significantly reduced. However, satisfactory progress has not been made toward eliminating militia control of local security, in other areas, as evidenced by continued militia influence of certain Baghdad neighborhoods and other areas across Iraq.

(xiv) Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward establishing the planned Joint Security Stations in Baghdad neighborhoods.

(xv) Increasing the number of Iraqi Security Forces units capable of operating independently.

Assessment: Although there is progress in the development and operation of the Iraqi Security Forces, the Government of Iraq has not made satisfactory progress

toward increasing the number of Iraqi Security Force units capable of operating independently.

(xvi) Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has made satisfactory progress toward ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected.

(xvii) Allocating and spending $10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq is making satisfactory progress in allocating funds to ministries and provinces.

(xviii) Ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the ISF.

Assessment: The Government of Iraq has not made satisfactory progress in ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the ISF.[239]

The White House did note the scale of the problem in its report to Congress:

Reconciliation in a society marked by nearly four decades of dictatorship will not be linear and will take time, patience, and support from the international community. The Iraqi leadership (and the United States) has sought to set a metric for national reconciliation through a series of laws to be enacted through Iraq's Council of Representatives. Moving these laws forward depends on deal-making among major players in a society divided along sectarian, ethnic, and other lines—and navigation of a nascent democratic system with checks and balances that, while protecting minority groups, also slows legislative progress. For these reasons, most of the major political benchmarks identified in the Act may prove to be lagging indicators of whether or not the strategy is succeeding.

While key national legislation has not yet passed, the objectives of such laws are in some ways already being achieved. For example: there is no revenue sharing law, and yet significant oil revenues are being distributed by the central government to the provinces in an equitable manner. There is no provincial powers law, and yet the provincial governors and councils are making decisions on budget expenditures through engagement with the central government and ministries and are providing essential services for their constituents. There is no amnesty law, and yet immunity is being granted to many former insurgents, who in turn are being recruited to join legitimate security institutions. There is no de-Ba'athification reform law, and yet more than 45,000 former Ba'athist members of the old armed services have been granted pensions or even restored to active duty or Iraqi government service. Amnesty or de-Ba'athification laws were assumed necessary to drive a wedge between nationalist elements of the largely Sunni insurgency and al-Qaida. In fact, Sunnis in record numbers are turning against al-Qaida, reclaiming their communities, and turning towards the central government for additional resources. These are precisely the "effects" the benchmarks were intended to produce, even if the formal benchmarks themselves have not been met. In the coming months, our strategy will increasingly focus on helping the Iraqis knit together this new "bottom-up" progress with the "top-down" political process. It will still remain vital for Iraq's national government to codify what is happening in practice through formal legislation over time.

On that point, political progress at the national level has still been disappointing. The natural tension between groups has been exacerbated by political blocs threatening to withdraw support from the government. These threats were not fully carried out in most cases, but they have contributed to an environment of mistrust and gridlock. It became clear in July that the fundamental problem at the national level was not the failure to pass legislation but that the principal political groups—Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurd—could not agree on a set of decision-making processes and power sharing arrangements. Consequently, Iraq's leadership (represented by the Prime Minister, Presidency Council, and the President of the Kurdish Region) met in Baghdad in August to address these more fundamental issues of executive branch decision-making.

These leaders on August 26—following 8 days of meetings—announced a basic agreement on key benchmarks legislation on provincial powers and de-Ba'athification. They also formalized the use of the "3 plus 1 group", or the Prime Minister and the three-member Presidency Council, for collective decision-making on sensitive and strategic matters. The leaders agreed to streamline executive branch activities to facilitate swift decision-making through an "inner-cabinet" consisting of core ministers, including Oil, Electricity, Defense, and Interior. And, for the first time, they "affirmed the necessity of a long-term relationship with the United States" based on common interests for the future of Iraq. The communiqué issued by these leaders has not solved Iraq's serious problems at the national level, but it does represent an important step forward in the ongoing struggle to overcome the fear and mistrust now dividing Iraq's ethnic and religious communities. The leaders' August 26 agreement is a necessary building block to meaningful political progress—which begins with all major communities coming together for dialogue on resolving key differences.

These Bush administration findings did not fully address how little the Iraqi government had done to meet the key needs and expectations of its people. It had not reached a meaningful agreement on any of the key issues dividing Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and Iraq's smaller minorities. It had not found an answer to federalism, local elections, defining provincial powers, and shaping sectarian and ethnic areas. It had not shown it was seeking a balance between Sunni and Shi'ite and would give Sunnis a fair share of power. It had not found any formal answer to sharing Iraq's oil export revenues and petroleum resources—the key source of money for all of Iraq's factions.

The True State of Progress in September 2007

The Bush administration's reports were issued in parallel with a second report from the Government Accountability Office, which reported significantly less progress in any of the areas upon which the U.S. Congress required the GAO to report.[240] If one examines the GAO report, other expert reporting on developments in Iraq, and considers visits to Iraq and interviews with Iraqis, the true level of progress may be summarized as follows:

1. Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and then completing the constitutional review. A committee was formed and "working," but the Sunnis had withdrawn from the

parliament, and there was little real progress in completing the review of more than 50 areas needing clarification. In any case, until the legislature approved the changes, and it was clear that the result was either approved in a referendum or accepted by the various factions of the Iraqi people, progress would not be a meaningful benchmark.

2. *Enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification reform.*

   Discussion and drafts existed. The details were not clear and no action by parliament was taken. The main Sunni party was not participating in the government, and Sunnis continued to be pushed out of posts in the government and security forces, given positions without real power, or were set aside.

3. *Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon resources to the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shi'a Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner.*

   A partial draft existed, but not the full text or annexes that could give the law meaning. There has been no action by the parliament to date and a parliamentary vote might well prove meaningless until the full law and annexes are issued, and the factions in Iraq see that the law is actually enforced. Once again, such an effort also involved a legal benchmark that seemed likely to have limited impact until the various key factions in Iraq actually saw that the practice met their demands, and the government demonstrated it could act effectively, without massive corruption, and in ways that helped rebuild and expand Iraqi oil production in ways that could actually support some form of conciliation or coexistence.

4. *Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.*

   No clear progress. A referendum on Kirkuk was supposed to take place by the end of the year, but was in limbo and a vote could trigger a new major round of fighting. Much of the displacement and fighting in Iraq increasingly did not occur in ways that supported the creation of such areas using the provincial boundaries in the constitution. Not only was government action lagging, it was unclear that such action could produce results that reflected Iraq's real-world internal sectarian and ethnic divisions or deal with the problem that close to 10% of Iraq's population—including many of its professionals and the most secular members of its middle class—were now refugees outside Iraq who had no prospects of returning to their previous homes and jobs.

5. *Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an Independent High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections.*

   Drafts were supposed to exist, and there were vague promises of bringing a bill to the parliament. No parliamentary action had been taken to date, and it was increasingly unclear such action would be meaningful if it did occur. Power had already devolved to unelected or quasielected authority in major provincial areas and major cities, often supported by local forces or militias, and with a clear sectarian or ethnic character.

6. *Enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty.*

   Drafts were supposed to exist, and there were promises of bringing a bill to the parliament. No parliamentary action had been taken to date, and broad distrust existed among Sunnis that any such legislation would actually be enforced on an equitable basis

7. *Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are accountable only to the central government and loyal to the Constitution of Iraq.*

   No meaningful drafts seemed to exist, and no parliamentary action had been taken to date. The growing U.S. reliance on local security forces in areas like Anbar, steady growth of the role of local Shi'ite security forces in the south and southeast, and the ethnic character of security forces in the Kurdish areas also meant the growing sectarian and ethnic polarization of police and security activity throughout the country regardless of whether some of these forces took a formal oath or loyalty to the government or were formally enrolled in the police.

8. *Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad Security Plan.*

   There has been mostly token progress on this front. Sectarian displacement and "cleansing" continued in spite of the security effort. Central government improvements in aid and services have been token to nonexistent. Creating committees will not become a meaningful benchmark unless they can play a role in halting and reversing sectarian and ethnic polarization on the ground in Baghdad, to ring and belt cities, other major cities, and the divided and conflict areas on a national level.

9. *Providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations.*

   The main elements of such Iraqi forces arrived more or less on schedule, but levels of manned readiness were variously reported to be 50–75 percent. Some battalion elements had performed well, but they seemed to total only one brigade equivalent and some have had little impact on the field. Much of the existing force was to rotate out.

10. *Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions in consultation with U.S. Commanders, without political intervention to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.*

    Progress here had been largely cosmetic. The Iraqi government could have and did exercise a veto of some operations, but most planning and command activities were still performed by the United States. The Shi'ite militias had largely stood aside or dispersed, and action had been taken only against the most extreme elements of the Mahdi militia. In practice, U.S. forces had turned to local security forces and tribal groups with only tenuous loyalty to the central government in areas like Anbar and Diyala, Kurdish leaders controlled operations in Kurdish areas while local Shi'ite political factions controlled security in most of the areas in the south where responsibility had supposedly been transferred to Iraqi forces.

11. *Ensuring that the Iraqi Security Forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law.*

    A failure both in Baghdad and nationally. Some police posts were active, but most areas are under police or local security forces with strong sectarian, ethnic, and tribal ties. Police corruption and inactivity were common, and the United States and the Iraqi government increasingly had to rely on local tribal forces. The so-called "year of the police" in 2006 had given way to the "year of local forces" in 2007 throughout much of Iraq.

12. *Ensuring that, as President Bush quoted Prime Minister Maliki as saying, "the Baghdad Security Plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation."*

Major progress did occur in fighting the most extreme Sunni insurgent movements like al-Qa'ida and against some extreme elements of the Mahdi militia. In general, however, most of the Shi'ite militias simply stood down but remained a threat. Sectarian polarization continued, and there were no reports of broad success in dealing with corruption, extortion, intimidation, and organized crime.

13. *Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security.*

Violence had grown steadily worse at the national level, and the United States and the Iraqi government had become more and more dependent on local security forces like the tribes in Anbar, although some local forces did take an oath to the government and joined the police.

14. *Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.*

This had been done with some success in roughly half of Baghdad, but many such stations did not have effective Iraqi forces. Many such stations effectively tied down U.S. forces in a relatively static role while making them more vulnerable. The creation of such stations had yet to demonstrate that they had lasting tactical value or brought security and stability to the areas where they were established.

15. *Increasing the number of Iraqi Security Forces units capable of operating independently.*

There had been some increases in ISF capability, but "independently" did not yet mean they could conduct offensive operations on their own, they did not have the needed logistic capabilities, nor could they counter a major insurgent force without U.S. reinforcements, artillery, armor, and airpower.

16. *Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected.*

No progress. Feuding between Shi'ite parties had increased, while the key Sunni party had left government. Tensions remained high, as did the risk to members.

17. *Allocating and spending $10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis.*

Money was beginning to be spent, but it was unclear what it would buy and for whom. There were no improvements in essential services on a national basis.

18. *Ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the ISF.*

This was scarcely a productive benchmark—it was more of a danger in creating a strong man or coup. In any case, many Iraqi political figures were quite frank about the limits of the ISF.

The Iraqi central government remained too weak and divided to make the agreements and compromises required. Despite pressure by the Bush administration and U.S. Congress, Iraqi lawmakers were reluctant to succumb to the Bush administration's timetable for crucial issues. "We have two clocks—the Baghdad clock and the Washington clock," said Mahmoud Othman, representative for the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. "This has always been the case. Washington has been pushing the Iraqis to do things to fit their agenda."[241]

To the extent progress did occur, it was in limited areas such as establishing and enacting procedures to form semiautonomous regions; establishing political, media, and economic services committees in support of the Baghdad security plan; creating

joint security stations in the neighborhoods in Baghdad; and ensuring the rights of minority political parties in the legislature. Some other suggested benchmarks, such as spending some $10 billion in unallocated development funds—were largely meaningless since there was no useful accounting of what the spending actually achieved.[242]

Opposition Grows to the Maliki Government

While much of the blame must be shared among all of Iraq's leaders and factions, the Shi'ite-led government of Prime Minister al-Maliki faced growing opposition and doubts during the course of 2007. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 11, 2007—the day after President Bush announced the new U.S. strategy—"We believe the Iraqi Government, which has not always performed, has every reason to understand the consequences now of nonperformance. They, after all, came to us and said that this problem had to be solved.'' When questioned by Senator Biden about Prime Minister al-Maliki's resolve, Secretary Rice said, "I think he knows that his government is, in a sense, on borrowed time, not just in terms of the American people but in terms of the Iraqi people," but she thought he would work toward holding up his side of the bargain.[243]

Prime Minister al-Maliki expressed doubts of his own. He told the *Wall Street Journal,* "I didn't want to take this position. I only agreed because I thought it would serve the national interest, and I will not accept it again." He added, "I wish I could be done with it even before the end of this term. I would like to serve my people from outside the circle of senior officials, maybe through the parliament, or through working directly with the people." Maliki's statement showed the effects of a trying first eight months in office and did not help create confidence in his government.[244]

At the same time, former Prime Minister and secular member of parliament Ayad Allawi announced that he was forming a new coalition to overrule al-Maliki on several issues. He said that he wanted to impose martial law for two years, purge the Interior Ministry, and allow former Ba'ath Party members to hold government jobs. He had little support when he announced his agenda, but Kurdish lawmakers said they would consider joining if they saw more action than words. A Shi'ite representative said he grew concerned about the coalition when he saw Allawi traveling to the Kurdish city of Irbil with U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad.[245]

In late March, the Iraqi Minister of Justice, Hashim al-Shibli, also broke with the Maliki government. Al-Shibli resigned from his position in the cabinet, citing differences with the government. He was a member of the secular National List Party and was the first minister to leave office since al-Maliki had become prime minister almost a year before.[246]

The decision of two key groups to leave al-Maliki's cabinet further threatened his power. Cabinet ministers loyal to the radical Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr resigned on April 16, 2007, to protest Prime Minister al-Maliki's refusal to set a timetable for an American withdrawal. All six of the ministers loyal to al-Sadr left the government, saying that their positions would be given back to the government to

choose their successors. The 30 Sadrists in parliament, however, would not be leaving and would continue to work for the withdrawal of U.S. forces.[247] Al-Maliki nominated six ministers to replace the Sadrists on May 24, 2007. Al-Maliki stated that the new ministers were "independent technocrats" and had been chosen after an extensive vetting process.[248]

A Sunni bloc also threatened to withdraw on May 1, 2007. The Iraqi Consensus Front, a Sunni bloc made up of three parties, said that it may remove its five cabinet ministers, but would keep its 44 representatives in parliament. The group filed a statement to al-Maliki saying it had "lost hope in rectifying the situation despite all of its sincere and serious efforts to do so." The bloc cited the lack of basic services in Sunni areas in Baghdad, the failure to ratify the oil law, and the failure to remove Shi'ite militias from Iraqi security forces.[249]

A week later, Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi said that he, too, would withdraw from the government if there was no movement on the constitutional issue of federalism. He argued that the document needed to be amended to ensure that Iraq could not be split into three states based on ethnicity or sect. Al-Hashimi had previously resisted calls from Sunnis to withdraw from the government. His statement, however, appeared to be aimed at instigating political progress rather than a real threat to withdraw from the government.[250]

The Impact of Growing Shi'ite Political Tensions

Part of the problem went far beyond al-Maliki and the central government. Differences between Shi'ite parties continued to threaten the breakup of the Shi'ite political bloc, the National Front. In March 2007 the Fadhila Party withdrew from the National Front, citing differences with leadership and a desire to defuse sectarianism in the government. This political tension fueled clashes in the Shi'ite south between Fadhila loyalists and members of Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army.

Tensions escalated further on April 17, 2007, when several hundred Sadrists joined protests in Basra against the Fadhila governor, Muhammad al-Waeli. The protesters said that the governor had failed to provide Basra residents with basic services, such as electricity, potable water, and jobs. There were also allegations of corruption and favoritism. One protester said that al-Waeli gave jobs at the large Southern Oil Company only to Fadhila loyalists.

The governor's office, however, said that the protests were a result of Fadhila's withdrawal from the Shi'ite coalition. There was no evidence that al-Waeli would resign in response to the protests.[251] The protests were nonviolent, but added another complex layer to political tensions in the Shi'ite south, where British forces planned to draw down large portions of their force strength over 2007.

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq Becomes the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC)

There were other shifts in Shi'ite politics that impacted the government's ability to achieve political conciliation and govern effectively. On May 13, the Supreme

Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq announced that the word "Revolution" would be dropped and its name would change to the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC). It also announced that Iran's top cleric would no longer reign as the party's dominant spiritual leader. This change represented a recent move among the party's leaders to shore up support among Iraqi nationalists and U.S. officials.

Jalal al-Din al-Sagheer, a Supreme Council leader in the parliament and a hard-line cleric said, "There is no need to talk about revolution anymore . . . The word means change, and we have achieved the changes through the Constitution." It was still unclear whether this nominal change represented a more significant shift in the party's political platform. For example, the Council continued to advocate a form of government that would allow clerics to override elected leaders, and it had not renounced its ties to Iran.[252]

In late June, two of Iraq's leading Shi'ite factions signed a cooperation agreement in which they agreed to sponsor cabinet officials despite specific party allegiances. The agreement between Prime Minister al-Maliki's Dawa Party and the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, headed by cleric Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, tentatively unified the four Shi'ite parties in parliament that previously contested each other into the United Iraqi Alliance. In an effort to create a wider consensus among moderates in the Iraqi parliament, the newly formed United Iraqi Alliance negotiated with Kurdish politicians. However, negotiations with the moderate Sunni Arab party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, failed.[253]

The SIIC may have opted for the unity move because Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, began treatment for lung cancer in the beginning of June, and his son, who would succeed him, was seen as an uncertain future leader.[254]

Al-Sadr's Shifting Role in Politics

Moqtada al-Sadr left Iraq for what he may have perceived as sanctuary in Iran shortly after the announcement of the surge strategy. He then took an ambiguous political stand upon his return to Iraq in late May 2007, after almost four months abroad in Iran. He publicly reached out to Sunni politicians and insurgents while purging some of the more rogue and extremist members of his Mahdi Army militia who targeted Sunnis. He also showed little support for the Maliki government and Shi'ite coalition, and again withdrew his deputies from the coalition party supporting the government in September 2007.

At the same time, elements of his forces continued to attack Sunnis and carried out reprisals for bombings against Shi'ite mosques and targets. In some cases, these attacks occurred under conditions where al-Sadr at least tolerated them, if he did not privately encourage them in spite of his public calls for Sunni-Shi'ite unity. As is discussed later, much—if not most—of the sectarian cleansing by Shi'ites during the period was driven by pro-Sadr elements, the JAM, and elements in the ISF that many felt were Sadrist.

Nevertheless, the United States and the Iraqi government tried to work with elements in the Sadrist movement. Ahmed Shaibani, a cleric who led al-Sadr's reconciliation committee, and Salah al-Obaidi, a senior aide to al-Sadr, were both released from detention centers by the U.S. military as part of an effort to neutralize the radicals in al-Sadr's movement. The United States sought to exploit the differences between the "irreconcilable" elements of the Mahdi Army and the "reconcilable" members with whom they were able to work.[255]

Members of the al-Sadr movement did engage in informal talks with Sunni politicians and insurgent groups in late April and early May. Hussein al-Falluji, a legislator in the Iraqi Accordance Front, the largest Sunni political bloc, said, "We think there is some possibility to have a closer relationship."[256] Salah al-Obaidi, a senior aide to al-Sadr, said that the move to disassociate the movement from the Maliki government was "one way to show we are trying to work for the welfare of Iraq and not only for the welfare of Shiites." Sadrists are currently forming a political bloc to challenge the Maliki government, but Mr. Obaidi said they are "not mature yet."[257]

According to some of his associates, al-Sadr believed that the Maliki government would not last much longer, given its failure to secure Iraq and stabilize its economy. Such a collapse would result in a political realignment, which would put the Sadrist movement in the running as one of the leading political elements in Iraq.[258] "We gave the government a historic opportunity, but al-Maliki did not use it, and that's why we are preparing for a state led by the Sadrist movement," said one of al-Sadr's political aides. "An Islamic state led by the Sadrists is our future."[259]

Yet, many observers and many of al-Sadr's Shi'ite rivals in the Maliki government doubted al-Sadr's desire or ability to work with Sunnis. Ridha Jawad Taqi, a senior legislator with SIIC said, "Now, it is very difficult . . . Between them, there's a gap made of blood. After Samarra, there is no possibility of reconciliation."[260] Referring to the efforts of al-Sadr's followers to form an opposition position after quitting the al-Maliki cabinet, Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe said, "The president of Iraq, the vice presidents, and the prime minister all support keeping US troops in Iraq . . . The Sadrists often make these claims, yet rarely produce a bill, let alone a majority."[261]

Al-Sadr personally continued to push for immediate U.S. withdrawal in his public speeches, as did many other members of the Iraqi Parliament. On May 11, 2007, 144 of the 275 members of parliament signed a petition for a timetable governing a withdrawal of U.S. troops. The withdrawal was to be contingent on the growth and ability of the Iraqi security forces, in order to ensure against the creation of a security vacuum upon their departure.

Some Sadrists, however, cautioned against an immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces. Saleh al-Igili, a member of the parliamentary bloc allied with Moqtada al-Sadr and who sponsored the petition, said, "The troop withdrawal would move in parallel with the build up of Iraqi troops, but their stay should not be for a long time." Bahaa al-Araji, a member of the Sadr bloc and head of the legal committee said the legislative committees drafting the bill asked the Interior and Defense

ministers for an estimated timeline for the effective development of the Iraqi security forces.[262]

Political Interference in Security Affairs

These problems went beyond an impasse in political accommodation. Despite pledges by the Iraqi government, there was still pro-Shi'ite political interference in security affairs. The *Washington Post* reported in late April that al-Maliki's office was responsible for detaining, firing, or threatening to fire at least 16 Army and National Police commanders since March 1, 2007. On paper, the reasons for the firing ranged from poor performance to corruption, but U.S. military officials questioned the real motives.

Brig. Gen. Dana J.H. Pittard, Commanding General of the Iraq Assistance Group, said that some of the commanders had successfully conducted operations against members of the Mahdi Army. Pittard said, "Their only crimes or offenses were they were successful. . . I'm tired of seeing good Iraqi officers having to look over their shoulders when they are trying to do the right thing." Another U.S. officer working with Iraqi troops said of the problem, "The politicization of their officer corps is the worst I've ever seen." The *Washington Post* article also focused on the Iraqi Office of the Commander in Chief, a small group that provided military advice to Prime Minister al-Maliki. U.S. officials, however, were concerned that the department held too much influence and that it was responsible for the series of firings.[263]

Widespread Iraqi political support for the surge strategy was elusive. On May 10, 138 of the 275 parliamentarians signed a draft bill that would cap the number of foreign troops at the current level. It would also require a timetable for the withdrawal of Coalition forces. The draft bill was proposed by the 30 members of the Council of Representatives loyal to al-Sadr. Various Sunni and Kurdish groups also signed it. The draft did not receive support from Prime Minister al-Maliki's Da'wa party, or SCIRI (which had renamed itself the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council or SIIC during the spring). The bill was proposed at the same time as a similar measure on U.S. troop presence was being debated in Washington.[264]

Progress in the Key Areas Shaping Political Accommodation

The overall failures in political accommodation were compounded by grindingly slow progress in several of the key areas necessary to make it possible and effective. Corruption, political divisions, and ineptitude crippled many areas of governance. U.S. and Iraqi forces sought to weed out corrupt Health Ministry officials, many of whom had ties to al-Sadr's Mahdi Army. In early February, U.S. and Iraqi forces raided the Health Ministry building in central Baghdad and arrested Hakim Zamili, the Deputy Health Minister. Al-Sadr had the authority to replace Zamili and did not react to the arrest.

The lack of meaningful elections and local political parties, effective governance and services, effective police and rule of law, and the growing national security crisis

also hindered political progress at the local level. U.S. and Iraqi forces in Baghdad had been working for months to invigorate neighborhood councils in Baghdad. The councils acted as local arbitrators and intermediaries between Iraqi/U.S. forces and the population. Members of the local councils, however, were constantly targeted, particularly in Sunni areas. For example, on March 14, 2007, the head of the Adhamiya District Council was killed on his way to work, just as his predecessor had been four months before. He was targeted by Sunni insurgents that opposed cooperation with the central Iraqi government and U.S. forces.[265]

Provincial Powers

There was token progress toward holding new provincial elections. On January 23, 2007, the Council of Representatives (CoR) passed a law creating the "Independent Higher Election Commission." The Pentagon's March 2007 report on Iraq said the following about the importance of local elections:

> The CoR must now appoint commission members and pass legislation to set a date for provincial elections. Successful local elections and a possible constitutional referendum will require sufficient Iraqi and international resources, and the United States will be working through diplomatic channels to take the necessary steps to help ensure that these electoral events—like the electoral event in 2005—are genuine and credible.[266]

By September 2007, however, the Iraqi government had not established a provincial elections law, or provincial council authorities, nor had it established a date for provincial elections.[267]

The "Oil Law"

Legislation regarding the distribution of oil wealth was framed by the Maliki government, but not completed in full, and was not submitted to parliament for approval through September 2007. The passage of the oil law stalled over disagreements over the role of foreign investment. The "law" was only a partial draft leaving many details unresolved. It was clear that no one could determine the degree of conciliation it would really bring until all parties could see how it would actually be implemented over time, and the degree of corruption and Arab Sunni, Arab Shi'ite, and Kurdish tension that could emerge as a result.

The Iraqi parliament approved one draft of the bill in February, but agreement was not reached on many details and on whether foreign oil companies or the state-run Iraqi National Oil Company (INOC) should hold the rights to Iraq's oil. Iraq's Oil Minister, Hussain al-Shahristani, proposed an annex in April that would grant 93 percent of Iraq's known oil fields and related contracts to INOC. Kurdish leaders have disagreed with Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs over the dominant role proposed for INOC, stating that a greater centralization of economic power will discourage foreign investment, a key component to Iraq's economic growth.[268]

The law was supposed to pass in Iraqi Parliament on May 31, 2007, but an agreement could not be reached by that date. Some members of the Iraqi Parliament objected to the proposed Iraqi oil law, claiming that it was "sloppy" and rushed in order to satisfy the May deadline proposed by the U.S. government. The law failed to address key issues, such as the prospective task of dividing oil revenues among the Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish regions, and the question of how much foreign investment to allow.

The Kurdish Regional Government opposed the placement of 93 percent of Iraqi oil fields under the administration of the prospective state-run Iraq National Oil Company according to the measure drawn up in May by the Iraqi central government. The Kurdistan Regional Government Web site claimed that some of these fields are at least partially in Kurdish territory and Kurdish officials who represent about one-fifth of the parliament said they would not support the bill if the measures are not redrawn.[269]

The issue of foreign investment was also left hanging. While energy experts warned that Iraq could not increase its oil production without foreign investment, Iraqis believed that allowing foreign investors to profit from Iraq would compromise the sovereignty of Iraq. The leader of the Federation of Oil Unions said that workers wanted oil production to remain under Iraqi control and threatened to strike to protest legislation that would result in increased foreign investment.[270]

Gal Luft, an energy expert at the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, felt that any decision regarding foreign investment would have little real-world impact until the country itself is stabilized, because foreign investors "won't come in." There were at least 15 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities in the first three months of 2007, including the slayings of oil industry workers, the bombing of wells, and the targeting of the pipeline from Baiji, in northern Iraq, to Turkey. Though the rate of attacks on oil facilities has dropped since last year, Luft said this is because the pipeline has been hit so often that it rarely functions, making it a less appealing target.[271]

Revenue sharing was also a contentious issue because of Sunni Arab and Kurdish distrust of the Shi'ite-led government, which would, under the proposed law, control the distribution of oil proceeds through a central government bank account.[272] In late June, the cabinet approved part of the legislative framework of the hydrocarbon law that outlined the responsibilities of a federal oil and gas council that would review contracts with oil companies. However, the cabinet did not approve a law regarding the division of oil revenues.

In mid-September, it appeared that the tenuous progress on the general outline of the oil law had collapsed. The main disagreement centered around Kurdish officials seeking more autonomy to independently sign oil contracts, and the Iraqi Oil Minister, Hussain al-Shahristani, who wanted more central government control. The dispute was aggravated by several contracts the Kurdish Regional Government signed to develop its fields independently. On September 14, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) called for al-Shahristani's resignation. The lack of parliamentary movement on passing the bill, combined with the Kurdish actions, made the prospects of any serious progress on an oil law very remote as of September 2007.

The White House benchmark report summarized the situation as follows:

> The Hydrocarbon Framework Law was approved by the Council of Ministers in February 2007 and reviewed by the Shura Council (a legal body) in the spring. Two versions of the law were submitted to the COR [Council of Representatives] in July. The companion Revenue Management Law was agreed to by Kurdish and Shi'a Arab political parties in June 2007 and in July was submitted to the Shura Council for review. The Revenue Management Law must be approved by the Council of Ministers (COM) before submission to the COR. Discussions among Iraqi political leaders are ongoing, and this legislation remains a primary focus for political party leaders.
>
> . . . The Government of Iraq has not made satisfactory progress toward enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon revenue . . . Many Sunni leaders (and some Shi'a as well) continue to disagree on the appropriate balance between national and regional control of hydrocarbon exploration and production. Meanwhile, the Kurdish Regional Government has sought to reinforce its own position on the national law by passing a new hydrocarbons licensing regime through its regional parliament. Given the fluid nature of the Iraqi political process, it is difficult to predict what further progress might occur once the COR reconvenes. Despite this uncertainty, the Government of Iraq is already distributing significant oil revenue on an equitable basis to the provinces and KRG through the Iraqi budget.[273]

De-Ba'athification Reform

Reforming Iraq's de-Ba'athification laws continued to divide Iraq's politicians and remained a key issue in reaching any future level of conciliation between Sunni and Shi'a Arabs. U.S. officials in Baghdad had steadily pressed the Iraqi government to meet key benchmarks throughout 2006. American officials said, however, that reversal of de-Ba'athification laws would take longer than originally expected. There were three plans from various Iraqi political groups that addressed the issue. The United States appeared to favor one plan that Iraqi President Jalal Talabani helped create, but it was clear that it would be some time before any final decision was made.[274]

The DoD report on "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," issued in March 2007, noted the lack of political progress between November 2006 and February 2007 in several key areas, including de-Ba'athification:

> The CoR [Council of Representatives] failed, however, to move forward on other critical pieces of legislation, including a law to reform the de-Ba'athification system and a law to clarify the powers of provinces that are not part of regions. On de-Ba'athification, there are currently three different proposals—one from the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, one from the cross-sectarian Iraqiyya Party, and one from the CoR De-Ba'athification Committee. Iraqi leaders are working to synthesize these drafts and reach an agreeable compromise position, with the three-member Presidency Council taking a leading role on this issue. On the provincial powers legislation, a draft law has been read twice on the floor of the CoR and appears headed for passage, though key issues, such as a date and structure for local elections, remain unresolved.[275]

De-Ba'athification efforts did not go beyond the drafting of new laws as the year progressed. On March 27, 2007, Prime Minister al-Maliki and President Talabani said that they sent a draft of a new de-Ba'athification law—called an Accountability and Reconciliation Law—to the Iraqi Cabinet and Parliament for approval. If accepted, the bill would offer ex-Ba'athists immunity from prosecution, the opportunity to return to government jobs, and the availability of pensions after a six-month period during which any Iraqi could file a lawsuit against the individual.[276]

However, the draft law immediately met opposition from Shi'ite and Kurdish lawmakers. Ali Lami, a member of the de-Ba'athification committee, said, "Our opinion is that this is an attempt to return Ba'athists into the highest echelons of power within the coming six months . . . without taking into account the many innocent victims who suffered from the Ba'athists." He also believed that the bill, negotiated by al-Maliki and Talabani, was the product of U.S. coercion. Lami, however, could have had more issues with the fact that the bill proposed to replace the Shi'ite-dominated de-Ba'athification committee with a panel of seven judges, to make it more independent.[277] The proposal was also rejected by Ahmad Chalabi, who is the head of the de-Ba'athification commission and relies on the commission for his role in the Iraqi government.[278] Furthermore, on April 2, 2007, Chalabi said Shi'ite Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani opposed the draft law, making it unlikely that the Shi'ite-dominated cabinet would accept the proposal. Iraqi government spokesman Ali Dabbagh, however, argued that al-Sistani had made no such statement and that the cleric "goes with the decisions of people's representative in parliament." He added that Chalabi's statement was doubtful because al-Sistani had been distancing himself from politics over the past year and was unlikely to get involved in such a heated dispute.[279]

On August 26, the leaders of Iraq's five major political groups announced that an agreement had been reached on draft de-Ba'athification legislation.[280] The United States continued to push the Iraqi Parliament to accept the revised de-Ba'athification law without success. Defense Secretary Robert Gates urged the parliament to accept the law before taking summer recess. Sources close to Prime Minister al-Maliki and key Shi'ite lawmakers, however, said that they had already watered down the bill and that even if it was adopted, it was too late to make a difference in bringing Sunnis back to the government.[281]

Amnesty and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration

There was equally little progress toward legislation establishing amnesty for insurgents, militiamen, and other criminals against the Iraqi government. However, some local efforts to offer amnesty to specific groups who were willing to give up violence were seen in the spring and summer of 2007. A workshop was held on May 12, 2007, in Baghdad, in which academics and political representatives discussed amnesty concepts.[282]

The Iraqi government included $150 million toward disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in its 2007 budget; however, the Ministry of Finance was waiting to release the funds until the government passed legislation agreeing to a

plan for disarmament. Senior Iraqi officials and political leaders, however, had not focused on the legislation as a priority. The July Benchmarks Assessment stated that it was not the right time for either amnesty or DDR to be initiated because of the sensitive security situation.[283]

Employment

Most experts projected unemployment at 40–60 percent, although a draft report from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad said unemployment in 2006 was only 17.6 percent.[284] The Pentagon's "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" for March 2007 described these employment problems as follows:

> Estimates of unemployment vary from 13.4 percent to 60 percent. Underemployment may be a much more significant factor. For example, a January 2007 survey by Multi-National Division Baghdad indicated that only 16 percent of Baghdadis responded that their current income meets their basic needs. The GOI [Government of Iraq] must, with Coalition and international help, create an effective strategy to provide jobs. This program must be seen as fair and nonsectarian by ordinary Iraqis. It must produce tangible results for the majority of Iraqis or it will decrease the legitimacy of the GOI. According to the US Chamber of Commerce, since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, new businesses have increased from 8,000 to more than 34,000.

While there were no authoritative statistics on how bad the situation was, public opinion indicated that the issue presented critical challenges. An ABC poll conducted in August 2007 indicated that 63 percent of Iraqis described their economic situation as "bad." A total of 72 percent felt the economic reconstruction efforts since the war of 2003 had been "ineffective." A total of 79 percent felt the employment situation was bad, with the figure rising to 85 percent in Baghdad and peaking at nearly 100 percent in Anbar. These figures were generally consistent with the results of an early poll in March 2007.[285]

Oil and Petroleum

Oil remained one of Iraq's most critical issues. All of Iraq's main factions recognized that oil revenues were the main source of revenue they could count on in the future, and the importance of controlling Iraqi's oil reserves and development. The insurgents saw petroleum facilities as a key target and a way of denying the Iraqi government and the Coalition resources and public support.

Oil production met the Iraqi government goal in the first quarter of 2007 (2.1 million barrels per day [mbpd]) and accounted for 67 percent of Iraq's gross domestic product (GDP) and 95 percent of internal government revenues.[286] The goal, however, had been lowered from 2.5 mbpd in 2006. Progress was made to implement a national oil law that shared revenue to provinces based on population.

In January 2007, the GAO presented Congress with a review of challenges facing rebuilding and securing Iraq. The GAO assessed developments in the oil sector as follows:

Iraq's oil production and exports have consistently fallen below US program goals. US and Iraqi efforts to restore Iraq's oil sector have been impeded by the lack of security, corruption, sustainability, and funding challenges. The unstable security environment continues to place workers and infrastructure at risk while protection efforts remain insufficient. Widespread corruption and smuggling affect the distribution of refined oil products, such as gasoline. The US reconstruction program has encountered difficulty with Iraq's ability to operate and maintain aging infrastructure. Further, uncertainties exist regarding the sources of future funding. These challenges could make it difficult to achieve current production and export goals, which are central to Iraq's government revenues and economic development. . .

Security conditions have effected Iraq's oil production and have, in part, led to project delays and increased costs. Insurgents have destroyed key oil infrastructure, threatened workers, compromised the transport of materials, and hindered project completion and repairs by preventing access to work sites. US officials reported that major oil pipelines in the north continue to be sabotaged, shutting down oil exports and resulting in lost revenues. Pipeline repair crews are overwhelmed by the amount of work and unable to make rapid repairs.

The US government has developed a number of initiatives to protect the oil infrastructure and transfer this responsibility to the Iraqi government. Such efforts include improving the capabilities of infrastructure protection forces such as the Oil Protection Force, a protection force for static infrastructure sites. The US military, with the assistance of other coalition forces, is also working to improve the capabilities of the Strategic Infrastructure Battalions. However, according to US officials, some units are of questionable capability and loyalty. . .

US and international officials note that corruption in Iraq's oil sector is pervasive. In 2006, the World Bank and Ministry of Oil's Inspector General estimated that millions of dollars of government revenue is lost each year to oil smuggling or diversion of refined products. According to State Department officials and reports, about 10 percent to 30 percent of refined fuels is diverted to the black market or is smuggled out of Iraq and sold for a profit. According to US Embassy documents, the insurgency has been partly funded by corrupt activities within Iraq and from skimming profits from black marketers.

In addition, Iraq lacks fully functioning meters to measure oil production and exports. . .According to the Ministry of Oil and the International Advisory and Monitoring Board, an absence of functioning meters precludes control over the distribution and sale of crude and refined products. The US government is currently taking steps to replace old and broken meters at the Al-Basra export terminal, Iraq's major oil export terminal. This project is scheduled for completion in April 2007.[287]

The March 2007 Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report said the following about the Iraqi oil sector:

Damage to pipelines, fires, poor maintenance, and attacks have combined to slow production of refined products and crude oil for export, primarily in central and northern Iraq. Production and exports in the south remain the primary driving force of Iraq's economy, although aging infrastructure and maintenance problems impede near-term increases in production and exports.[288]

The U.S. military did step up efforts to combat corruption and smuggling in the oil industry. Oil theft remained a major problem as did oil corruption. The U.S. military stationed in Kirkuk cracked down on oil smugglers. The U.S. commander in charge of the operation, Lt. Col. Jack Pritchard, said that smugglers raised roughly $50 million a year in oil theft. He also said, "It became a free for all [after the U.S.–led invasion in 2003]. I think [oil smuggling] is increasing because it has gone unabated for a number of years. We've seen tanker trucks here and there and we realized the enemy is making money here and we need to stop it." Military officials believed that smugglers ranged from poor local farmers to international criminal gangs.

Both U.S. and Iraqi officials agreed that a large black market and corruption were major problems; "police officers demanded bribes of as much as $1,000 to let tankers pass through checkpoints or for 'protection' along route," and "some government officials worked directly with smugglers or secretly owned gas stations and fuel trucks, giving them a share of money earned through illicit sales."

The Department of Defense Quarterly Report for June 2007 reported that the illicit sale of oil was being used by insurgent groups to fund their activities. Members of the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Oil's Oil Protection Force, who are obligated to protect infrastructure, were sometimes suspected in being complicit in these activities. In the Salah ah-Din Province, the Bayji refinery reported a loss of 70 percent of the fuel it processed, amounting to as much as $2 billion a year.[289]

On May 13, Iraq declared that between 100,000 and 300,000 barrels of oil a day over the past four years had been unaccounted for. The discrepancy was valued at $5 million to $15 million, averaging $50 dollars per missing barrel. This discrepancy could be due to a loss of oil through sabotage of pipelines or inaccurate reporting of production in southern Iraq, where water is pumped along with oil in the fields. Though crude oil is not as lucrative and much more difficult to smuggle, the Department of State has not ruled out the possibility of theft.

The Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction (SIGIR) reported in July 2007 that Iraq had a potential oil production capacity of 3 mbpd, but had an actual average production level of 2.09 mbpd (goal of 2.64 mbpd) and exports of 1.57 mbpd (goal of 1.65 mbpd). Average production was down by 6 percent relative to the last year, and by 23 percent relative to preinvasion levels. Exports were down by 6 percent relative to the last year. Almost all exports came through the south because of attacks on the pipelines through the north. The SIGIR found that much of the U.S. aid money had not been used effectively and that the Ministry of Oil showed little capability to effectively manage its capital budget.[290]

That same month, the GAO found major problems in every aspect of Iraq's petroleum development, and use of aid, and concluded the following:

> Despite 4 years of effort and $2.7 billion in U.S. reconstruction funds, Iraqi oil output has consistently fallen below U.S. program goals. In addition, the State Department's data on Iraq's oil production may be overstated since data from the U.S. Department

of Energy show lower production levels—between 100,000 and 300,000 barrels less per day. Inadequate metering, re-injection, corruption, theft, and sabotage account for the discrepancy, which amounts to about $1.8 to $5.5 billion per year.

Comprehensive metering of Iraq's oil production has been a long-standing problem and continuing need. Poor security, corruption, and funding constraints continue to impede reconstruction of Iraq's oil sector. The deteriorating security environment places workers and infrastructure at risk while protection efforts have been insufficient. Widespread corruption and smuggling reduce oil revenues.

Moreover, Iraq's needs are significant and future funding for the oil sector is uncertain as nearly 80 percent of U.S. funds for the oil sector have been spent. Iraq's contribution has been minimal with the government spending less than 3 percent of the $3.5 billion it approved for oil reconstruction projects in 2006.

Iraq has yet to enact and implement hydrocarbon legislation that defines the distribution of oil revenues and the rights of foreign investors. Until this legislation is enacted and implemented, it will be difficult for Iraq to attract the billions of dollars in foreign investment it needs to modernize the sector. As of July 13, 2007, Iraq's cabinet has approved only one of four separate but interrelated pieces of legislation—a framework that establishes the structure, management, and oversight. Another part is in draft and two others are not yet drafted. Poor security, corruption, and the lack of national unity will likely impede the implementation of this legislation.[291]

By September 2007, little progress had been made either in rehabilitating Iraq's oil industry—much less expanding its sustainable production and export capacity—or in defeating oil corruption, increasing oil exports, or passing the oil law. U.S. forces stationed around the major oil fields in northern Iraq also continued to uncover smuggling networks that caused irreparable damage to the oil infrastructure. For example, the oil fields in Kirkuk could produce close to 600,000 barrels per day in normal conditions, but smuggling, sabotage, and insurgent attacks reduced output to 180,000 barrels per day.[292]

Electricity

Most key government services that involved Iraq's infrastructure had suffered badly from the insurgency and civil conflicts, and they remained another underlying cause of Iraqi violence. The electricity sector, like the oil sector, continued to suffer from lack of security and slow reconstruction. The president's new plan recognized the importance of providing basic services to all Iraqis, but it had become clear that building the infrastructure and securing it would take several more years. The electrical grid was underdeveloped during Saddam Hussein's regime and, therefore, required long and costly modernization. The patience of many Iraqis, however, particularly in Baghdad where most of the Saddam-era power had been directed, was quickly fading.[293]

A GAO report to Congress in January 2007 cited the following critical challenges facing the electricity sector, virtually all of which remained unchanged in early September 2007:

The deteriorating security environment continues to pose a serious challenge to Iraq's electricity system, leading, in part, to project delays and increased costs for security services. Electrical workers and infrastructure are inadequately protected and are subject to targeted attacks. The security situation also makes it difficult to get workers, parts, and equipment to sites. Moreover, looting and vandalism have continued since 2003, and major electrical transmission and fuel lines have been repeatedly sabotaged, cutting power to other parts of the country. According to Ministry of Electricity and US officials, workers are frequently intimidated by anti-Iraqi forces, and have difficulty repairing downed lines.

In an effort to stop the sabotage, the ministry contracted with tribal chiefs to protect the transmission lines running through their areas, paying them about $60 to $100 per kilometer, according to State's Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO). However, in October 2006, IRMO officials reported that this scheme was flawed and did not result in improved infrastructure protection . . .

The US reconstruction program has encountered difficulties with Iraq's ability to sustain new and rehabilitated infrastructure and address fuel requirements. Iraq's electricity sector suffers from deteriorated, outdated, and inefficient infrastructure resulting from two decades of underinvestment in operations and maintenance, replacement, and expansion. This weakened infrastructure has led to unplanned outages.

The rebuilding of the electricity sector has been slowed by the lack of training to enhance the skills of plant workers, inadequate spare parts, and an ineffective asset management and parts inventory system. Moreover, plants are sometimes operated beyond their recommended limits and use poor-quality fuels that rapidly deteriorate parts, involve longer maintenance downtimes, and increase pollution. According to US government officials, Iraq needs to develop cleaner and more reliable sources of natural gas for its generators and to formulate an integrated fuel strategy to address these needs. Currently, Iraq's fuel supply does not meet demand and its quality is inconsistent.

For example, of the 35 natural gas turbines the US government installed in power generation plants, 16 are using diesel, crude, or heavy fuel oil due to the lack of natural gas and lighter fuels. As a result, maintenance cycles are reportedly three times as frequent and three times as costly. Poor-quality fuels also decrease the power output of the turbines by up to 50 percent and can result in equipment failure and damage, according to US and Iraqi power plant officials. The US government also estimates that Iraq is flaring enough natural gas to generate at least 4,000 mw [megawatts] of electrical power. Because of natural gas shortages, diesel has to be imported at a cost of about $1.2 billion a year, thus straining economic resources.[294]

To make up for electrical shortages, many Iraqi citizens have established private entrepreneurial generator arrangements to produce electricity on a neighborhood or building basis, therefore underestimating total electrical production. The gap between government-produced supply and consumer demand continues to increase due to the failure to add or rehabilitate capacity, as well as inadequate security, operations, and maintenance practices for the generation and transmission infrastructure. A surging demand is exacerbated by the fact that Iraqis pay very little, if anything, for electricity. Reform of electricity charges for consumers is key to the long-term viability of Iraq's electricity sector.[295]

In a Press Briefing on March 1, 1007, Army Brig. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, Commander of the Army Corps of Engineers in the Gulf, told reporters that a full electrical grid in Iraq would most likely not be available until 2013. He added that Baghdad residents continued to receive only six to seven hours of electricity per day. The principal source of electricity for many Iraqis was privately owned generators, often shared throughout a neighborhood. Part of the problem, in addition to insufficient power lines and continued insurgent attacks against infrastructure, was a huge rise in demand (20–32 percent) after the 2003 invasion and the lifting of international sanctions. Walsh also reminded skeptics that during Saddam Hussein's rule, Baghdad typically received three times the power of the rest of Iraq, his point being that current distribution was more equitable.[296]

The U.S. government had exhausted all but 15 percent of its reconstruction fund of $4 billion for Iraq's electrical sector as of June 2007. The fund provided for 1,500 to 2,000 megawatts (MW) of capacity. When the fund is exhausted, which was anticipated to happen by late fall 2007, the Iraqi government will transition to take full control of rebuilding the electrical sector. The Iraqi government allotted $10 billion in reconstruction and infrastructure projects in its 2007 budget.[297]

For January through April 2007, the Department of Defense reported that an average of 3,973 MW were provided, compared to 3,898 MW provided during the same period in 2006. Based on the average daily demand and power generated, electricity was provided for an average of 14.5 hours per day in April nationwide, and 8.4 hours per day in April for Baghdad. Off-grid private owners of small generators also provided about 2,000 MW.[298]

The SIGIR reported in July 2007 that Iraqi demand for electric power was now estimated to be 8,120 MW, but generating capacity was only a maximum of 4,550 MW, some of which was normally off-line and delivered by a mix of generators and a power grid that was vulnerable to attack, and which had many technical and reliability problems. This was in spite of the fact that the United States had now allocated $4.61 billion in aid, much of which had been ineffective, subject to combat damage, or provided in the form of projects that Iraq could or would not sustain once U.S. aid was finished.[299]

Iraq's national problems were compound by an increasing unwillingness to share power across regional, ethnic, and sectarian lines, particularly in al-Anbar and the southeast. The end result was that 92 percent of the Iraqis polled found the supply of electricity was "bad" in September 2007, up from 88 percent in March. These numbers approached 100 percent in Baghdad, al-Anbar, and Diyala provinces.[300]

It is worth noting that electricity was only one of the many problems in government services ranging from education and security to vital infrastructure issues like water. The SIGIR also found major problems in the government's ability to manage both the supply of drinking water and Iraq's irrigation system. For example, water supply and distribution problems meant that

> progress in the water sector is impeded by violence, a lack of trained facility workers, and inadequate maintenance practices. In Mosul, approximately 60% of homes and

businesses have access to potable water. Although 75% of homes in Basrah have access to raw water, potable water must still be purchased. Although the goal for Baghdad is to provide potable water for all homes and businesses, only 30% are connected to water distribution lines. Iraq's sewerage system also requires improvement: many cities lack updated sewerage systems and rely on septic systems. In Kirkuk and Samarra, streets and alley-ways are used for open drainage. In Falluja, raw sewage spills out onto the streets and thus into water sources. In Najaf, 40% of homes are connected to sewage lines, and 50% of homes in Basrah are connected.

The inability of Iraq's water ministries to sustain projects continues to limit progress in the sector. The security situation is the "number one challenge faced by ministries today in executing their work." Deteriorating conditions are "increasingly affecting the ability of both the Ministry of Water Resources and the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works to operate and has reached a crisis stage."[301]

Health Care

A worsening public health crisis in Iraq affected virtually all Iraqis and was now so serious that it was clear it would have a serious impact on future generations of Iraqis. An April 2007 study by the World Health Organization (WHO) found that 70 percent of Iraqis lacked access to clean water, which helped account for two-thirds of the deaths of children under 5, and 21 percent of Iraqi children were chronically malnourished. The report said that the public health system was crippled by displacement of people, the loss of nurses and doctors, and the lack of basic medical supplies.

The report also estimated that an average of 100 people were killed every day, and the number of wounded was far higher, but could not be estimated with any accuracy. The Iraqi government told the WHO that nearly 70 percent of critically injured patients died in hospitals as a result of lack of staff, drugs, and equipment. Further, Iraqis suffering from injuries or illness not related to the violence, including pregnant women, often avoided going to a hospital for security reasons, leading to increased deaths from preventable ailments.[302]

Many of Iraq's doctors and health-care staff had fled the country since 2003 to escape debilitating working conditions and threats to their lives. The insurgency continued to target doctors and nurses, many of whom were seen as being aligned with the Sadr-controlled Health Ministry, regardless of their ethnicity and sect. The "brain drain" and the public health crisis in Iraq would clearly have adverse effects for decades to come, and without a minimum level of security, it would almost impossible for U.S. aid and NGOs to alter the outcome.[303]

In an effort to stem the brain drain, the Iraqi government forbade Iraqi medical schools from issuing certificates and transcripts to graduating doctors that would allow them to leave the country. The system had been previously used in the Hussein regime. A government spokesman said that the medical students could obtain the certificates after completing six years of work in Iraqi hospitals. The decision underscored the dire situation of Iraq's medical system.

The Iraqi Medical Association estimated that some 40,000 doctors had fled the country since 2003. Some hospitals were running with half of their staff and were

increasingly unable to teach at medical schools. Students at one university in Baghdad attended class only 25 percent of the time due to the violence.[304]

Once again, the SIGIR reported in July 2007 that the system and quality of care continued to deteriorate and that much of the aid effort had little impact or was wasted.[305] An ABC poll found that 67 percent of the Iraqis polled felt the availability of medical care was "bad" in September 2007, roughly the same as in March. These numbers approached 100 percent in Baghdad and al-Anbar provinces and 92 percent in Diyala Province.[306]

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE FAILURES OF THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT

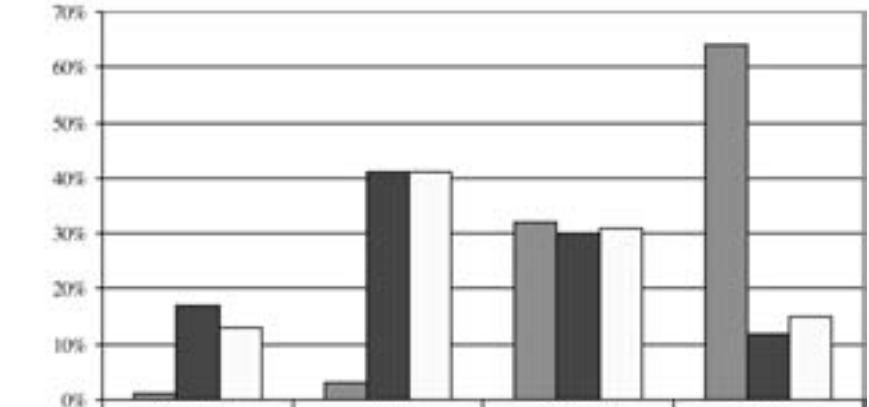
It is hardly surprising that Iraqi confidence in the government's ability to effectively govern and bring security to the country continued to drop through the spring of 2007. A comprehensive poll of Iraqi public opinion was conducted by ABC News, in conjunction with *USA Today,* BBC News, and ARD German TV. The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to August 24, 2007. It was the fourth in a series of polls that started in 2004.[307]

Iraqi Perceptions of the Government and Iraq's Political Future

According to the spring poll, only 41 percent of the population was not confident in the government in 2005, but this rose to 51 percent in March 2007, and 61 percent in August.[308] As shown in Figure 11.15, the majority of Sunnis expressed not much or no confidence in the government (96 percent), leaving little hope that they would seek reconciliation. In contrast, 58 percent of Shi'ites had a great deal or a lot of confidence in the government. In addition, Figure 11.16 shows that 98 percent of Sunnis disapproved of Shi'ite Prime Minister al-Maliki, along with 45 percent of Shi'ites and 65 percent of Kurds. Overall disapproval of al-Maliki rose from 57 percent nationwide in March to 66 percent in August.[309]

Figure 11.17 shows Iraqi expectations for the future of Iraq. In August 2007, 62 percent thought that Iraq should remain a unified state with a central government in Baghdad. This was still the most popular answer with Sunnis—97 percent—followed by 56 percent of Shi'ites and 9 percent of Kurds. This rose from 58 percent of Iraqis in favor of a unified state with a central government in Baghdad, but is still below the 70 percent in 2005 and 79 percent in 2004.

A total of 28 percent thought Iraq should end up as a group of regional states with regional governments and a less powerful government in Baghdad in both August and March 2007, compared with 18 percent in 2005 and 14 percent in 2004. Another 9 percent thought Iraq should be divided into separate states (less than 1 percent Sunni, 2 percent Shi'ite, and 49 percent Kurd), a drop from 14 percent in March 2007.

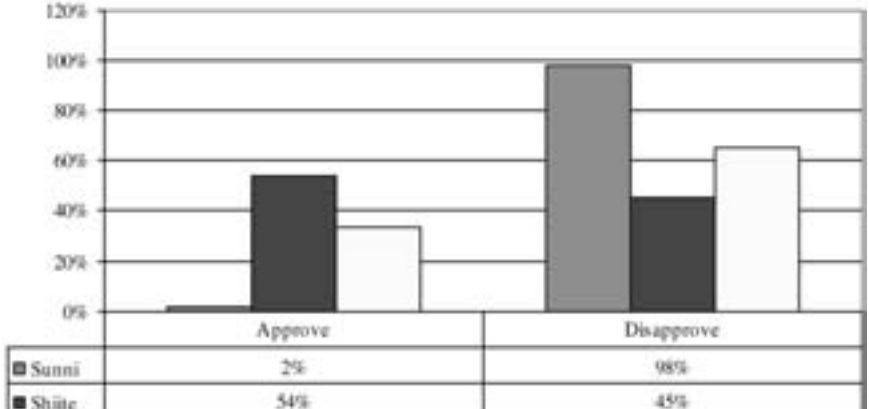


	Great Deal	A lot	Not Much	None
Sunni	1%	3%	32%	64%
Shiite	17%	41%	30%	12%
Kurdish	13%	41%	31%	15%

Source: "Iraq: Where Things Stand," ABC News/USA Today/BBC/ARD Poll, August 24, 2007

Figure 11.15 Confidence in the Iraqi Government

There was a difference, however, in the measure of what government Iraqis thought their country *should* have in the future, and what they thought it *would* have. In March 2007, only 43 percent thought that Iraq would remain unified with a central government (75 percent Sunni, 27 percent Shi'ite, and 20 percent Kurd). Another 34 percent thought it would have regional and federal governments (14



	Approve	Disapprove
Sunni	2%	98%
Shiite	54%	45%
Kurdish	33%	65%

Source: "Iraq: Where Things Stand," ABC News/USA Today/BBC/ARD Poll.

Figure 11.16 Approval of Prime Minister al-Maliki

Figure 11.17 Political Structure that Iraq Should Have in the Future

	Aug. 2007	Mar. 2007	Nov. 2005	Feb. 2004
One unified Iraq with central government in Baghdad	62%	58%	70%	79%
A group of regional states with their own regional governments and a federal government in Baghdad	28%	28%	18%	14%
Dividing the country into separate independent states	9%	14%	9%	4%

Source: "Iraq: Where Things Stand," ABC News/*USA Today*/BBC/ARD Poll, August 24, 2007.

percent Sunni, 48 percent Shi'ite, and 37 percent Kurd). Finally, a significant 23 percent thought that Iraq would break into separate states (10 percent Sunni, 25 percent Shi'ite, and 41 percent Kurd). This large number of Shi'ites and Kurds who thought Iraq would break into independent states was significant because it reduced the likelihood that these sects would work to incorporate Sunni concerns by compromising on key issues such as de-Ba'athification and federal distribution of oil wealth.

Iraqi Perceptions of Security, Violence, and Risk

The March 2007 Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report included polls conducted by MNF-I in December 2006. The samples included 5,000–12,000 respondents nationwide. These polls found that two-thirds of the Iraqi public "expresses a sense that conditions for peace and stability are worsening." Two-thirds felt "personally powerless to do anything to stop the violence." The poll did continue to show that Iraqis generally rejected greater control by sectarian militias. The DoD report stated that roughly 80 percent of Iraqis thought "militias should be dissolved, with more than half reporting that they thought militias make conditions more dangerous."

The ABC News, *USA Today,* BBC News, and ARD German TV poll conducted in February and March 2007 found the following:

> Widespread violence, torn lives, displaced families, emotional damage, collapsing services, an ever-starker sectarian chasm—and a draining away of the underlying optimism that once prevailed. Violence is the cause, its reach vast. Eighty percent of Iraqis report attacks nearby—car bombs, snipers, kidnappings, and armed forces fighting each other or abusing civilians. It's worst by far in the capital, Baghdad, but by no means confined there. The personal toll is enormous. More than half of Iraqis, 53 percent, have a close friend or relative who's been hurt or killed in the current violence. One in six says someone in their own household has been harmed. Eighty-six percent worry about a loved one being hurt; two-thirds worry deeply. Huge numbers limit their daily activities to minimize risk. Seven in 10 report multiple signs of traumatic stress.[310]

The poll found that while 63 percent of Iraqis said they felt very safe in their neighborhoods in 2005, only 26 percent said this in August 2007. Twenty-eight percent did not feel safe at all. In Baghdad, home to a fifth of the country's population, 84 percent felt entirely unsafe in March 2007. Even outside of Baghdad, just 32 percent of Iraqis felt "very safe" where they lived in March 2007, compared with 60 percent a year and a half before.[311]

Nationally, 17 percent of all Iraqis surveyed reported in August 2007 that ethnic cleansing—the forced separation of Sunnis and Shi'ites—had occurred in their neighborhoods. In mixed-population Baghdad, it was 31 percent in March 2007. In rare, though undesirable, agreement, 98 percent of Sunni Arabs and Shi'ites alike opposed the separation of Iraqis on sectarian lines in August 2007. Nonetheless, one in seven Iraqis overall—rising to a quarter of Sunni Arabs, and more than a third of Baghdad residents—said in March 2007 they themselves had moved from their homes in the last year to avoid violence or religious persecution.

Another poll was conducted by London-based Opinion Research Business (ORB) in Iraq in mid-February 2007.[312] ORB conducted 5,019 face-to-face interviews from February 10–22 using a sample drawn from 1997, which may not reflect demographics ten years later. ORB interviewed 104 persons in al-Anbar Province, 1,200 in Baghdad, and 314 in Diyala. It was not clear who conducted the interviews.

A total of 27 percent of Iraqis in February 2007 believed their country was in a state of civil war. This response reached almost 50 percent in Salahuddin, Kirkuk, Dohuk, Diyala, and Ninewa. The majority of the mostly Sunni population (accounting for 67 percent of the inhabitants) in al-Anbar thought that Iraq was in a state of civil war. A total of 41 percent of Sunni respondents agreed with this answer, compared with only 15 percent of Shi'ites. An additional 22 percent of the population, represented by 22 percent of Sunnis and 21 percent of Shi'ites, thought Iraq was close to a civil war, but not in one yet. Twenty-one percent of the population also thought Iraq would never reach the level of fighting of an all-out civil war. This response was common among Shi'ites—27 percent—and the southern Shi'ite-dominated provinces. Less than 1 percent of the respondents in Sunni al-Anbar Province believed Iraq would descend into an all-out civil war.

Iraqi perceptions of the surge were overwhelmingly negative. Just 43 percent of Iraqis in August rated their local security as positive, the same percentage as in March 2007. Only 11 percent believed security had improved in Iraq as a whole in August. The surge was widely seen as doing more harm than good, with 70 percent of Iraqis believing that the surge had made security worse in surge areas, and 68 percent believing it had made security worse in the rest of Iraq as well.[313] Seventy-two percent of Iraqis overall believed in August 2007 that the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq was making the security situation worse. Furthermore, the percentage of Iraqis who believed U.S. and Coalition forces should "leave now" had steadily risen, from 26 percent in November 2005, to 35 percent in March 2007, to 47 percent in August 2007.[314]

Figure 11.18 Kinds of Violence Iraqis Reported as Occurring Nearby and the Civil-Military Reaction in Early 2007

	All	Baghdad	Kurdistan	Rest of Iraq
Type of Violence Encountered (% reporting)				
Kidnappings for ransom	40%	58%	4%	41%
Gov't/anti-gov't fighting	34%	57%	1%	33%
Car bombs, suicide attacks	32%	52%	3%	31%
Snipers, crossfire	30%	56%	*	27%
Sectarian fighting	25%	49%	1%	22%
Perceive Unnecessary Violence by (% reporting)				
U.S./Coalition forces	44%	59%	9%	47%
Local militia	31%	44%	2%	32%
Iraqi police	24%	44%	1%	22%
Iraqi Army	24%	44%	0%	22%
Any of these	80%	100%	12%	86%
Four or more of these	37%	70%	1%	34%
Friend/family member harmed	53%	77%	29%	49%
Focus of Efforts to Avoid Violence (% who try to avoid)				
U.S./Coalition forces	81%	95%	85%	40%
Passing through checkpoints	66%	92%	64%	17%
Passing by police stations/public buildings	55%	91%	45%	10%
Markets/crowds	54%	74%	53%	17%
Travel	53%	71%	54%	18%
Leaving home	51%	77%	48%	5%
Going to/applying for work	43	63	40	7
Sending children to school	39	66	32	3

Notes: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.* = less than .5%.

Source: "Iraq: Where Things Stand," ABC News/*USA Today*/BBC/ARD Poll, March 19, 2007, http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=2954716.

Perceptions of the Causes of Violence

The ABC News poll also asked in March 2007 about nine kinds of violence that broke down the security problems Iraqis and ISF forces faced into far more detail than the Coalition and the United States have publicly reported (car bombs, snipers or crossfire, kidnappings, fighting among opposing groups or abuse of civilians by various armed forces). These results are reflected in Figure 11.18.[315]

Most Iraqis in Baghdad said at least one of these had occurred nearby; half reported four or more of them. Some 53 percent of Iraqis said a close friend or immediate family member had been hurt in the current violence. That ranged from three in ten in the Kurdish provinces to nearly eight in ten in Baghdad. Even outside Baghdad, 74 percent reported at least one form of violence, and 25 percent reported

four or more (34 percent including the Kurdish area, which was far more peaceful than the country overall).[316]

Iraqis living in Baghdad experienced the most intense and diverse forms of violence, according to the ABC News poll. In all of Iraq, 40 percent said that a kidnapping for ransom had occurred near them, 32 percent said car bombs or suicide bombings occurred nearby, 30 percent witnessed snipers, and 25 percent experienced sectarian fighting. The most common form of violence reported, however, was unnecessary violence by U.S./Coalition forces.[317]

12

Changes in the Insurgency and Forces Shaping Civil Conflicts in 2007

The new "surge strategy," al-Qa'ida's excesses and the Tribal Awakening in Anbar, and the failure of Iraq's leaders to move toward accommodation and conciliation were the key factors that changed the dynamics of Iraq's insurgency and civil conflicts during 2007. They were, however, only part of the story. The overall pattern of civil violence did not change, and much of Iraq continued to divide on sectarian and ethnic lines. At the same time, there was nothing "soft" or orderly about this process.

By September 2007, at least 2 million Iraqis had been driven outside Iraq, largely into Jordan and Syria. Over a million had been displaced within Iraq, joining another million that had been displaced by warfare and previous violence at the time Iraq was ruled by Saddam Hussein. Much of Iraq's 27 million people had been hurt, threatened, or impoverished. Some estimates put the number of dire poor as high as 8 million. As the previous chapter has noted, the percentage of unemployed and underemployed may have accounted for nearly half of Iraq's work force of over 7 million. As many as 100,000 had died and many more had been hurt or wounded.

The country also threatened to divide into four unstable regions in which violence, and ethnic and sectarian cleansing, would continue: a factionally divided Shi'ite south; an unstable Sunni-dominated Anbar and mix of other areas in the north and west, a Kurdish-dominated zone in the three northern provinces with an unresolved dividing line between Kurd and Arab; and a mixed zone in Baghdad, Diyala, and other areas in central and eastern Iraq where the struggle for sectarian and ethnic control continued, mixed with ongoing "cleansing."

This did not yet seem to mean the formal division of the country into separate regions or nations, but it did threaten to steadily weaken the real-world power of the central government. It also made Iraq increasingly vulnerable to outside

interference. Turkey was a source of pressure to the north, Iraq to the east, Syria to the west, and the Sunni Arab states to the south and southwest.

On February 27, in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, Head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, described the situation in Iraq as follows:

> The perception of unchecked violence is creating an atmosphere of fear, hardening sectarianism, empowering militias and vigilante groups, hastening a middle-class exodus, and shaking confidence in government and security forces. The sectarian violence, an inexperienced and weak central government, immature institutions, problems in providing basic services, and high unemployment are encouraging more Iraqis to turn toward sectarian groups, militias, and insurgents for basic needs, threatening the unity of Iraq. Moreover, robust criminal networks act as insurgent and terrorist force multipliers. Many Sunni Arabs, motivated by fear, financial incentive, perceptions of marginalization, and exclusion from Iraqi government and security institutions, act as insurgent sympathizers, capable of supporting the insurgency.
>
> Since 2003, the fight to define post-Saddam Iraq has been primarily an intra-Arab conflict to determine how power and authority will be distributed. We note that conditions for the further deterioration of security and stability exist within this ongoing struggle. Although a significant breakdown of central authority has not occurred, Iraq has moved closer to this possibility because of weak governance, increasing security challenges, and the lack of a national compact.
>
> Conflict in Iraq is in a self-sustaining cycle in which violent acts increasingly generate retaliation. Insecurity rationalizes and justifies militias, in particular Shi'a militias and increases fears in the Sunni Arab community. The result is additional support, or at least acquiescence, to insurgents and terrorists such as AQI [al-Qa'ida in Iraq]. Shi'a militants, most notable Jaysh al-Mahdi, account for some of the increases in violence. Baghdad is the center of the Shi'a and Sunni Arab conflict as both groups fight for territory and political influence. Sectarian attacks constitute most of the violence in mixed-ethnic areas in and around the capital, while Coalition Forces remain the primary target in the Shi'a South and Sunni West.[1]

The Department of Defense (DoD) March 2007 "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" Quarterly Report to Congress made similar points:

> The term "civil war" does not adequately capture the complexity of the conflict in Iraq, which includes extensive Shi'a-on-Shi'a violence, al-Qa'ida and Sunni insurgent attacks on Coalition forces, and widespread criminally motivated violence. Some elements of the situation in Iraq are properly descriptive of a "civil war," including the hardening of ethno-sectarian identities and mobilization, the changing character of the violence, and population displacements. Illegally armed groups are engaged in a self-sustaining cycle of sectarian and politically motivated violence, using tactics that include indiscriminate bombing, murder, and indirect fire to intimidate people and stoke sectarian conflict. Much of the present violence is focused on local issues, such as sectarian, political, and economic control of Baghdad; Kurdish, Arab, and Turcoman aspirations for Kirkuk; and the political and economic control of Shi'a regions in the south. Although most

attacks continue to be directed against Coalition forces, Iraqi civilians suffer the vast majority of casualties.[2]

A U.S. National Intelligence Assessment (NIE) issued at the end of August 2007 did note some progress as a result of both U.S. security operations and rising Sunni tribal resistance to al-Qa'ida, but only of a limited and uncertain kind, and noted that much depended on a continued U.S. military presence and political effort:

> There have been measurable but uneven improvements in Iraq's security situation since our last National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq in January 2007. . . . to date, Iraqi political leaders remain unable to govern effectively.
>
> There have been modest improvements in economic output, budget execution, and government finances but fundamental structural problems continue to prevent sustained progress in economic growth and living conditions. We assess, to the extent that Coalition forces continue to conduct robust counterinsurgency operations and mentor and support the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), that Iraq's security will continue to improve modestly during the next six to 12 months but that levels of insurgent and sectarian violence will remain high and the Iraqi Government will continue to struggle to achieve national-level political reconciliation and improved governance. Broadly accepted political compromises required for sustained security, long-term political progress, and economic development are unlikely to emerge unless there is a fundamental shift in the factors driving Iraqi political and security developments.
>
> Political and security trajectories in Iraq continue to be driven primarily by Shi'a insecurity about retaining political dominance, widespread Sunni unwillingness to accept a diminished political status, factional rivalries within the sectarian communities resulting in armed conflict, and the actions of extremists such as AQI and elements of the Sadrist Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) militia that try to fuel sectarian violence.
>
> . . . Perceptions that the Coalition is withdrawing probably will encourage factions anticipating a power vacuum to seek local security solutions that could intensify sectarian violence and intra-sectarian competition. At the same time, fearing a Coalition withdrawal, some tribal elements and Sunni groups probably will continue to seek accommodation with the Coalition to strengthen themselves for a post Coalition security environment.
>
> . . . Coalition military operations focused on improving population security, both in and outside of Baghdad, will remain critical to the success of local and regional efforts until sectarian fears are diminished enough to enable the Shia-led Iraqi Government to fully support the efforts of local Sunni groups. Iraqi Security Forces involved in combined operations with Coalition forces have performed adequately, and some units have demonstrated increasing professional competence. However, we judge that the ISF have not improved enough to conduct major operations independent of the Coalition on a sustained basis in multiple locations and that the ISF remain reliant on the Coalition for important aspects of logistics and combat support.
>
> . . . The IC assesses that the Iraqi Government will become more precarious over the next six to 12 months because of criticism by other members of the major Shi'a coalition (the Unified Iraqi Alliance, UIA), Grand Ayatollah Sistani, and other Sunni and Kurdish parties. Divisions between Maliki and the Sadrists have increased, and Shi'a factions have explored alternative coalitions aimed at constraining Maliki . . . The strains of the security

situation and absence of key leaders have stalled internal political debates, slowed national decision making, and increased Maliki's vulnerability to alternative coalitions . . . We judge that Maliki will continue to benefit from recognition among Shi'a leaders that searching for a replacement could paralyze the government.[3]

CONTINUING SECTARIAN VIOLENCE

The trends in the worst forms of sectarian violence in Iraq have already been discussed in the previous chapter. The most radical elements of the Sunni insurgency had little to gain, and much to lose, from political accommodation or conciliation. Groups like al-Qa'ida in Iraq responded to the new U.S. and Iraqi government strategy with a mix of major bombings and focused attacks. On January 30, 2007, bomb attacks killed dozens of Shi'ite pilgrims visiting holy sites in Karbala, Baghdad, and Najaf during the Shi'ite Ashura festival. In Balad Ruz, Diyala Province, a suicide bomber killed 17 and wounded 57 when he walked into a Shi'ite mosque. In Baghdad the death toll for the day was 27, with 53 people wounded.[4]

A long series of bombings and attacks followed, many clearly designed to generate sectarian and ethnic violence or to try to drive the United States out of Iraq by increasing U.S. casualties. One such sequence of attacks against Shi'ite pilgrims occurred in the days before the Arbaeen festival in early March. On March 6, 2007, a bomb targeting an Iraqi Army checkpoint killed four soldiers and wounded one civilian in eastern Baghdad's Ubaidi district; a car bomb in Baghdad killed five Shi'ite pilgrims and wounded ten others as they were marking a religious event by walking to Karbala; a car bomb killed two pilgrims and wounded ten others when it targeted a group of pilgrims passing through southern Baghdad's Dora district; another car bomb targeting pilgrims killed one and wounded three others in western Baghdad; a roadside bomb exploded near pilgrims, wounding two in northern Baghdad's Sulaikh neighborhood; and a roadside bomb targeting pilgrims wounded two in the Ilaam district of southern Baghdad. A total of 220 Shi'ite pilgrims were killed in the week-long series of attacks.

Another significant attack occurred on March 14, 2007—one month after the start of the Baghdad plan. In Baghdad, gunmen ambushed the convoy of Sadr City's Mayor, Rahim al-Daraji, seriously wounding him. The director of the Sadr City police station, Lt. Col. Muhammad Motashar, was killed in the attack. Al-Daraji had acted as an intermediary between U.S. military officials and Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and supported the establishment of two Joint Security Stations in Sadr City.[5] Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, Salam al-Zobaie, was also seriously wounded after a suicide bomber attacked him at his home on March 23, 2007. Al-Zobaie was a secular Sunni politician, and U.S. and Iraqi officials suspected al-Qa'ida in Iraq of carrying out the attack.

Another series of bombings and sectarian reprisal attacks in the northern city of Tal Afar in the last week of March underscored the broad scope of sectarian conflict. Tal Afar is a majority ethnic Turkoman city, with about 70 percent Sunnis and 25 percent Shi'ites. A suicide bomber who lured victims to his truck to buy wheat

detonated one of the bombs. The second was in a used car lot. Most of the 152 killed and 300 wounded were Shi'ites, which spurred reprisal attacks by the majority Shi'ite police.

At least 12 policemen were detained after witnesses said that they went into a Sunni neighborhood in Tal Afar, dragged residents from their homes, and shot them. The Iraqi Army, which eventually stopped the killing, estimated that 70 Sunnis were killed and another 40 were injured in the reprisal attacks. Reporting on the incident noted that numerous Sunnis in the Tal Afar police force had recently been dismissed and replaced with hundreds of untrained Shi'ite policemen.[6]

The number of attacks, however, continued to be less relevant than the fight for control of political and economic space. Maps of Baghdad and other major cities with mixed populations showed a steady separation of the population on sectarian and ethnic lines and reflected the efforts of the dominant side to push the other out or exclude it.

The March 2007 DoD Quarterly Report to Congress reported on these trends as follows:

> The conflict in Iraq has changed from a predominantly Sunni-led insurgency against foreign occupation to a struggle for the division of political and economic influence among sectarian groups and organized criminal activity. The level of violence in Iraq continued to rise during this reporting period as ethnic, tribal, sectarian, and political factions seek power over political and economic resources.

The January–March UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Report described the complex nature of the fighting in Iraq as follows:

> The distinction between acts of violence motivated by sectarian, political or economic considerations was frequently blurred as a multitude of armed and criminal groups claimed responsibility for numerous acts of terror. The prosecutorial and investigative capacity of the Iraqi state was and is likely to remain inadequate in the face of relentless attacks by armed groups operating with impunity under the umbrella of both Sunni insurgent groups and Shi'a militia.[7]

The UNAMI report stated that sectarian violence was most pronounced in areas with a variety of ethnic groups and religious sects, including the governorates of Baghdad, Babil, Diyala, Salahuddin, and Ninewa. The report also noted, however, the following:

> Relatively quieter areas of Missan, Wasset, al-Muthanna and Dhi-Qar governorates were also affected by the overall climate of instability, as well as by tensions resulting in part from the rapid influx of displaced populations. Particularly prevalent were targeted assassinations, among the victims being former Ba'ath Party members, professional groups, students, members of minority groups and security officials.[8]

The DoD Quarterly Report for June commented as follows:

> This reporting period saw an increased effort to provide security to the population of Iraq. The increasingly complex conflict has remained a struggle among and within ethnosectarian, criminal, insurgent and terrorist groups to wrest political and economic power from the elected GoI. Much of the violence is attributable to sectarian friction, and each faction is driven by its own political and economic power relationships. Illegally armed groups are engaged in a cycle of sectarian and politically motivated violence, using tactics that include indiscriminate bombing, murder, executions, and indirect fire to intimidate and to provoke sectarian conflict. The United States is supporting Iraqi efforts to reduce sectarian violence in Baghdad, regain control over the capital, and defeat al Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) and its supporters, ensuring that they find no safe haven in Iraq.[9]

The end result was a continuing pattern of violence where U.S. and Iraqi offensives targeted the Sunni insurgency and rogue Shi'ite militia members in Baghdad and the surrounding urban belt. The insurgency responded by putting continued pressure on the Shi'ites and Kurds to restart the cycle of violence. It also sought to stretch U.S. and Iraqi forces beyond the areas they could win and hold by expanding their attacks and bases outside of the capital.

Growing Soft Sectarian and Ethnic Cleansing and Displacement

While the surge and the Sunni Tribal Awakening did reduce the number of attacks and civilian casualties in many parts of the country, "softer" forms of violence, including ethnic cleansing, intimidation, and beatings or kidnappings, continued unabated. Even in Baghdad, the focus of the 2007 surge strategy, ethnic cleansing continued in several neighborhoods, often with the active or tacit support of Iraqi security forces.

Soft sectarian and ethnic cleansing were common tactics that sectarian and ethnic groups used to intimidate members of opposing ethnic groups and sects, as well as nationalists who refused to take a side in the civil conflict. Locally armed groups could win the support of communities by forcing individuals from minority sects to leave their homes through threats or killing of family members, leaving only members of one ethnic group. While this type of violence is difficult to measure directly, it was reflected in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) found in Iraq.

As has been touched upon earlier, the number of IDPs became a steadily more critical aspect of Iraq's "four wars" during 2007. Nearly 2 million Iraqis had fled the country by the time the surge began, and the total was well over 2 million by the end of August 2007. The number of internally displaced persons since the February 2006 Askariya mosque bombing was over 1 million at the end of August 2007, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[10]

The January–March 2007 UNAMI report on the situation estimated that up to 8 million people could be classified as "vulnerable" and in need of immediate assistance, 2 million people were actively seeking asylum or refugee status outside of Iraq, 1.9 million were internally displaced, and 4 million lacked sufficient food. Later UNAMI/UNDP (UN Development Programme) briefings put the number of

internally displaced at over 1.1 million by the end of August 2007 and indicated the number of displaced had risen from 50,000 to 60,000 per month.

The Iraqi Red Crescent Organization (Iraqi RC) compiled results on Iraqi IDPs that were widely consistent with the UNAMI/UNDP numbers. However, the Iraqi RC found that roughly 100,000 people per month had been fleeing their homes since February 2007. The Iraqi RC also found that the number of IDPs had more than doubled (from 499,000 to 1.1 million) since the U.S. surge began.[11]

The International Organization for Migration found that 63 percent of Iraqis displaced in 2007 had moved because of threats to their lives. This is a key indicator of soft sectarian and ethnic cleansing. According to Dana Graber-Ladek of the International Organization for Migration, "Basically, Iraqis are fleeing because they flee for their lives."[12]

Baghdad continued to be a center of Shi'ite sectarian cleansing that pushed many Sunnis out of the city and into areas like the Baghdad "ring" of Sunni towns to the north of the city and Diyala. It also continued to be a destination for many internally displaced Iraqis. Many IDPs coming to Baghdad were Sunni despite Shi'ite efforts at sectarian cleansing. UNAMI estimated that at least 120,000 IDPs were displaced and living in Baghdad, although many had been displaced from other areas in the capital, moving from areas in which they were a sectarian minority to ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods.

IDPs continued to cite threats to their lives due to their religious sect or ethnic group as the primary reason for their displacement. UNAMI also found that women and children made up about 75 percent of the newly displaced. Displaced persons continued to face greater health risks and many lacked access to basic services, such as electricity, water, health care, and education. The UNAMI report stated that ten governorates had imposed stricter laws on the entry of IDPs, making it difficult to obtain residency permits and access to these basic services.[13]

Daily conditions continued to deteriorate at a rapid rate for many Iraqis. The UN report stated,

> An estimated 54 percent of the Iraqi population is living on less than US$ 1 per day, among whom 15 percent is living in extreme poverty (less than US$ 0.5 per day); acute malnutrition rapidly rose from 4.4 to 9 percent from 2003 to 2005, as per the latest available data. Some 432,000 children were reported to be in immediate need of assistance, while the annual inflation rate in Iraq jumped to an estimated 70 percent in July 2006. The unemployment rate has risen to around 60 percent; only 32 percent of Iraqis have access to drinking water and health facilities lack critical drugs and equipment.[14]

UNAMI estimated that for every male killed, five or more family members became vulnerable and in need of assistance. The UN also stated that the governorates in south and central Iraq were most in need of humanitarian aid, which clearly corresponded with the lack of security in these provinces.[15]

The Iraqi central government—and sometimes the U.S. government—downplayed the seriousness of these problems. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) reported

in January 2007 that the majority of IDPs felt well received in their new communities. Most did flee from mixed communities to areas in which their sect was the majority. However, in the last months of 2006, the large numbers of IDPs in some communities along with poor economic conditions created tensions between IDPs and host communities:

> Local authorities decided to close the governorate's borders to all IDPs except those who were originally from Karbala, and even most of these were restricted from entering. Najaf also reportedly restricted settlement in Najaf city. These restrictions were attributed to a strain on the health sector, overcrowding of schools, and a lack of infrastructure to accommodate the influx of IDPs.
>
> In some governorates, the recently displaced were blamed for an increase in violence. Local authorities in many governorates required security checks for any Iraqi who arrived registered with MoDM [Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration] IRCS [Iraqi Red Cresent Society], or other entities.[16]

Refugee and displacement problems were made worse by the fact that Jordan and Syria became more restrictive in allowing Iraqis to cross their borders. Jordan had accepted hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees, but faced growing security concerns as the sectarian conflict in Iraq spread out from Baghdad.[17] Large numbers of Iraqis were stuck in a gray zone in refugee camps at both borders, after having been refused entrance for "security reasons." A travel agent in Baghdad said that 50 to 60 families were leaving on buses each day, and most were heading to Syria.

About 160,000 internally displaced Iraqis fled sectarian violence to the northern area of Kurdistan, according to Refugees International.[18] Prospects for Arabs living in Kurdish areas, however, were sometimes grim. The region of Kurdistan continued to attract some IDPs due to better security conditions. There were few job opportunities, and ethnic violence had steadily increased in the large cities of Mosul and Kirkuk. The Kurdish authorities required that IDPs provide the name of a Kurdish guardian with whom they would be staying.

Refugees International found that Christians generally had an easier time entering the region than Muslim Arabs. Another key problem was language; few schools in the north taught Arabic, and there were very limited job opportunities for Arabic speakers. It was clear that Kurdistan did not want the sectarian violence in the rest of the country to travel north. Aspirations of Kurdish autonomy also limited sympathies for Iraqi Arab refugees.[19] The report concluded that IDPs in Kurdistan "are struggling to survive, the victims of inattention, inadequate resources, regional politics and bureaucratic obstacles." Some 87 percent of IDPs relocated to areas in the south and center of the country.[20]

Iraqi government officials said during the early days of the new Baghdad security plan that returning internally displaced persons to their homes was a priority. Iraqi military spokesman Qasim al-Mousawi announced in early March that some 1,000 families had returned to their original homes in Baghdad. In return, the government offered the families $200 for moving expenses. Other sources put the compensation

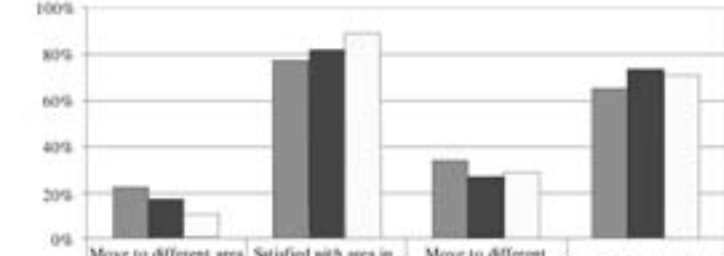
price as high as $750.[21] Only a week later, al-Mousawi said that 2,000 families had returned to their homes in the capital.[22]

The reality, however, was very different. Much of the inflow consisted of Shi'ites coming from Sunni-dominated or high-risk areas and taking over Shi'ite homes. The Sadr militia, in particular, began to exploit its ability to drive Sunnis out of parts of Baghdad and other Shi'ite-controlled areas to sell or rent the homes it seized—sometimes fully furnished with the effects of the Sunnis who fled.

Iraqis who did return to their homes in Baghdad reported that the neighborhoods were much less safe than the Iraqi government implied. Sunni and Shi'ite families interviewed by the *New York Times* moved back to their homes in early March, only to be forced out again. Others were so tired of moving around that they said they would simply fight insurgents instead of relocating. Furthermore, officials at the Iraqi Ministry of Migration said that they were not telling people to return home because they "could be the reason behind the killing of a family."[23]

The ABC/*USA Today*/BBC/ARD (ARD is a German TV network) poll described in the previous chapter asked Iraqis whether they had experienced ethnic cleansing in their area, and the results are summarized in Figure 12.1.[24] In all of Iraq, 12 percent said they had experienced ethnic cleansing and 15 percent were internally displaced. In Baghdad, however, those numbers were much higher; 31 percent experienced ethnic cleansing, and 35 percent had moved their homes to avoid violence. Out of the sample of Sunni Arabs, 26 percent had been internally displaced. Some 30 percent of those polled said they would leave Iraq if they could.

In addition, roughly 75 percent said they "lacked the freedom to live where they wish without persecution, or even to move about safely." A total of 48 percent of all those polled cited security as their biggest problem in their lives, an increase from



	Move to different area in Iraq	Satisfied with area in Iraq	Move to different country	Satisfied living in Iraq
Sunni	25%	77%	34%	65%
Shiite	18%	82%	27%	73%
Kurdish	11%	89%	29%	71%

Source: "Iraq: Where Things Stand," ABC News/USA Today/BBC/ARD Poll, March 19, 2007, available at: http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=2954716

Note: The survey was conducted by a field staff of 150 Iraqis, including 103 interviewers, interviewing 2,212 randomly selected respondents at 458 locales across the country from February 25 to March 5, 2007.

Figure 12.1 Percentage of Iraqis Affected by Ethnic Cleansing and Displacement

18 percent in 2005. Less than half of Iraqis, 42 percent, thought that life was better in 2007 than under Saddam Hussein.

According to an ORB (a U.K. research firm) poll, 50 percent of respondents had experienced the murder of a member of their family, the murder of a friend or colleague, the kidnapping of a member of their family, or the kidnapping of a friend or colleague. The most common response, 26 percent, was the murder of a relative. Fifty-eight percent of Sunnis had not experienced any of the above types of violence, compared with 47 percent of Shi'ites. A total of 31 percent of Iraqis living in Baghdad had experienced the murder of a relative. This response was also high in Diyala Province with 35 percent.[25]

Despite the scale and impact lower forms of violence had in Iraq, U.S. military officials could little more than try to stop it in the areas they controlled. A U.S. commander in west Baghdad told his troops, "We're not going to get into repopulation. That is a political problem. When people call, what we need to tell them is it is not safe to resettle. That is my line right now. It is not safe." Sectarian murders in Baghdad fell sharply during the first few weeks of U.S. President George W. Bush's new plan, but U.S. commanders reiterated that real security for the population would take several more months to achieve.[26]

CHANGES IN THE SUNNI INSURGENCY

Some factors did potentially ease this process of division, displacement, and violence. As has been described in Chapter 11, the overall pattern of Sunni insurgent activity changed radically during the spring and summer of 2007. Al-Qa'ida's efforts to dominate tribal and urban areas in Anbar—which included assassinations, extortion, forced marriages, and enforcement of extreme "Islamic" custom and social practices—pushed many tribal leaders into active and violent resistance. During the spring and summer, an increasing number of tribes, as well as two major Sunni insurgent groups, shifted from attacking the U.S. forces and the Iraqi security forces to active attacks on al-Qa'ida. They also turned to the United States for aid and began to work with Iraqi Army and Iraqi police units in the area.

Changes in the Structure and Unity of the Sunni Insurgency

These developments had an impact on the structure and unity of the Sunni insurgency. On March 13, 2007, Reuters reported that Iraqi police arrested Ahmed Faraj and Ali Jassim, leaders in the 20th Revolutionary Brigades insurgent group, in Abu Ghraib district in the western outskirts of Baghdad. The Brigades did not join the Mujahideen Shura Council or the Islamic State of Iraq in 2006, but had been known to work with al-Qa'ida on some attacks. The Brigades, however, stated that personal tensions with al-Qa'ida's tactics and leadership led the group to remain outside the Islamic State. Former Ba'athist extremist groups, for the most part, did not join forces with al-Qa'ida.[27] On May 1, 2007, U.S. troops killed Muharib Abdul Latif al-Jubouri, a senior figure in al-Qa'ida in Iraq linked to the kidnappings of Americans Jill Carroll and Tom Fox and other foreigners.

The structure and strength of most Sunni insurgent groups remained as uncertain as ever, although some sources indicated that there were 12 major insurgent groups.[28] Some insurgent groups—like the 1920 Brigades—also turned against al-Qa'ida. However, the most violent elements of the Sunni Arab insurgency continued to be dominated by the eight members of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), led by al-Qa'ida in Iraq. The Mujahideen Shura Council, created in January 2006, had announced the ISI in October and declared Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi the emir. In April 2007, ISI announced on a Web site that Abu Ayyub al-Masri, leader of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, was the "minister for war" for the Islamic State. The announcement said that ISI was in the process of forming a "cabinet." Other positions included ministers of information, "prisoners and martyrs," agriculture, and health.[29]

ISI activity was responsible for a continued series of large-scale suicide bombings, and it and other extreme insurgents continued to use improvised explosive devices (IEDs) against military and civilian targets. There was also evidence that some of the ISI cadres in Baghdad moved out to the urban belt surrounding the capital, or provinces to the north. Diyala Province saw a marked increase in insurgent activity, putting U.S. and Iraqi forces under considerable strain.

The Defense Intelligence Agency assessed the threat posed by the most extreme elements of the Sunni insurgency as follows:

> Attacks by terrorist groups account for only a fraction of insurgent violence, yet the high-profile nature of their operations and tactics have a disproportionate impact. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) is the largest and most active of the Iraq-based terrorist groups. AQI's attacks against Iraqi government targets and Coalition Forces continue with a particular intent to accelerate sectarian violence and destabilize Baghdad. AQI is one of the most visible perpetrators of anti-Shi'a attacks in Iraq and has capitalized on the current cycle of sectarian violence by increasing perceptions its operations are in defense of Sunni interests. AQI will continue to attempt to dominate the news cycle with sensational attacks. Ansar al-Sunna, the second most prominent terrorist group in Iraq, also poses a threat to stability in Iraq; however its longstanding ties to AQI are increasingly strained. Hard numbers for foreign fighters in the Iraq insurgency are unavailable. DIA judges less than 10 percent of insurgents are foreign fighters. The majority of these individuals are used as suicide bombers.[30]

The March 2007 Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report came to a similar conclusion:

> AQI [Al-Qa'ida in Iraq] and associated foreign fighters attack Coalition and GOI [Government of Iraq] targets and both Shiites and Sunnis to further AQI's goal of establishing an Islamic state in Iraq and to build a sanctuary to support operations against targets outside Iraq.
>
> Goals of Sunni Insurgents:
>
> - Expel US and Coalition forces from Iraq
> - Topple the "unity" government

- Re-establish Sunni governance in Anbar and Diyala

Goals of AQI:

- Force Coalition forces withdrawal
- Gain territory to export conflict
- Provoke clash between Islam and others
- Establish caliphate with *Shari'a* governance[31]

The new Commander of CENTCOM, Adm. William J. Fallon, told Congress on April 18, 2007, that Sunni neo-Salafi insurgents—namely, al-Qa'ida in Iraq—were still the most "destabilizing element" in Iraq. He added, "Of all the things that we have on the plate in Iraq, the one that I think is first and foremost as a target for us to try and get a grip on and to neutralize is the group that is very clearly al-Qa'ida motivated that is linked to Sunni extremists in this country that are perpetrating these big suicide bombings."[32]

U.S. officers and intelligence experts made it clear that al-Qa'ida and similar movements now benefited from four years of experience, plus the lessons learned from other fighting. They talked about the "Darwinian evolution" that left only the best cadres and fighters alive and forced new recruits to learn or die. Some used the phrase "fourth-generation AQI."

Officials also noted that al-Qa'ida and its umbrella organizations did not falter after the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in June 2006. Maj. Gen. Michael Barbero, a Department of Defense spokesman, said,

> It has been able to replace leaders . . . We are very active in, almost nightly, going after these leaders and trying to take down this network. And whenever you do that, then more intelligence pops up as they try to react and adjust their network . . . These are new leaders emerging.[33]

Increased Tensions and Fighting between "Nationalist" and Neo-Salafi Islamist Insurgents

Even though some of the most extreme elements of the insurgency had previously claimed to unite under the title of the "Islamic State of Iraq," the overall structure of the insurgency was increasingly factionalized.[34] This led some of the more moderate Sunni insurgent groups to accuse al-Qa'ida of killing and kidnapping their fighters and others said that their association with al-Qa'ida in Iraq was "tainting their image as a nationalist resistance force." Since 2003, nationalist insurgents groups had focused their goal on removing foreign troops from Iraq, while al-Qa'ida's long-term goal was part of a greater global struggle.

A leader of the Mujahideen Army, based in Baquba, said, "We do not want to kill the Sunni people nor displace the innocent Shi'a, and what the al-Qa'ida

organization is doing is contradictory to Islam . . . We will strike whoever violates the boundaries of God, whether al-Qa'ida or Americans."

The spokesman for the Islamic State of Iraq said that the small insurgent groups could either join the Islamic State or they would be considered enemies. It was unclear which small insurgent groups had broken away from the Islamic State, but local insurgents in Baquba, Diyala Province, said that they had erected checkpoints and barriers throughout the city and captured some 100 al-Qa'ida fighters in recent weeks. The smaller insurgent groups also made it clear that they had many disagreements among themselves and would not be uniting against al-Qa'ida.

The fighting between nationalist insurgents and neo-Salafi Islamist insurgents became more intense in late May 2007. Residents in the Sunni Adhamiya neighborhood in Baghdad reported that clashes had erupted between fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sunni nationalist Islamic Army of Iraq for control of the neighborhood. The Islamic Army of Iraq had announced earlier in May that it had joined with another nationalist group to form the "Jihad and Reform Front." Adhamiya was one of the few remaining Sunni communities on the eastern side of the Tigris River in Baghdad and had long been one of the most dangerous for U.S. and Iraqi forces and Iraqi civilians.[35]

The August NIE summarized this situation as follows:

> Coalition forces, working with Iraqi forces, tribal elements, and some Sunni insurgents, have reduced al-Qa'ida in Iraq's (AQI) capabilities, restricted its freedom of movement, and denied it grassroots support in some areas. However, the level of overall violence, including attacks on and casualties among civilians, remains high; Iraq's sectarian groups remain unreconciled; AQI retains the ability to conduct high-profile attacks; and to date, Iraqi political leaders remain unable to govern effectively.
>
> . . . Two new drivers have emerged since the January Estimate: expanded Sunni opposition to AQI and Iraqi expectation of a Coalition drawdown. Perceptions that the Coalition is withdrawing probably will encourage factions anticipating a power vacuum to seek local security solutions that could intensify sectarian violence and intrasectarian competition. At the same time, fearing a Coalition withdrawal, some tribal elements and Sunni groups probably will continue to seek accommodation with the Coalition to strengthen themselves for a post Coalition security environment. . . Sunni Arab resistance to AQI has expanded in the last six to nine months but has not yet translated into broad Sunni Arab support for the Iraqi Government or widespread willingness to work with the Shi'a. The Iraqi Government's Shi'a leaders fear the groups will ultimately side with armed opponents of the government, but the Iraqi Government has supported some initiatives to incorporate those rejecting AQI into Interior Ministry and Defense Ministry elements.
>
> . . . The IC assesses that the emergence of "bottom-up" security initiatives, principally among Sunni Arabs and focused on combating AQI, represent the best prospect for improved security over the next six to 12 months, but we judge these initiatives will only translate into widespread political accommodation and enduring stability if the Iraqi Government accepts and supports them. A multi-stage process involving the Iraqi Government providing support and legitimacy for such initiatives could foster over the longer-term political reconciliation between the participating Sunni Arabs and the

national government. We also assess that under some conditions "bottom-up initiatives" could pose risks to the Iraqi Government.

. . . We judge such initiatives are most likely to succeed in predominantly Sunni Arab areas, where the presence of AQI elements has been significant, tribal networks and identities are strong, the local government is weak, sectarian conflict is low, and the ISF tolerate Sunni initiatives, as illustrated by Al Anbar Province. . . Sunni Arab resistance to AQI has expanded, and neighborhood security groups, occasionally consisting of mixed Sunni-Sunni units, have proliferated in the past several months. These trends, combined with increased Coalition operations, have eroded AQI's operational presence and capabilities in some areas. . . Such initiatives, if not fully exploited by the Iraqi Government, could over time also shift greater power to the regions, undermine efforts to impose central authority, and reinvigorate armed opposition to the Baghdad government.

. . . the reluctance of the Sunni states that are generally supportive of US regional goals to offer support to the Iraqi Government probably bolsters Iraqi Sunni Arabs' rejection of the government's legitimacy.[36]

The Islamic State continued to claim responsibility for many of the large-scale attacks in the spring of 2007, such as the April 12 bombing of the Iraqi Parliament building. It was far from clear whether the growing fracturing of the Sunni insurgency would benefit the United States and the Coalition, and all the groups continued to oppose the "occupation" and the Shi'ite-dominated Iraqi government.[37]

There was also evidence of divisions in the Ba'athist elements of the insurgency. U.S. and Iraqi intelligence officials suspected a split between the leader of the ex-Ba'athist movement former top aide to Saddam Hussein, Izzat Ibrahim, and a former general in Hussein's army, Mohammad Yunis Ahmad. It appeared that the former general was trying to take control of the Ba'athist insurgency from Ibrahim.[38]

The increasing tensions between nationalist and neo-Salafi insurgent groups resulted in a serious split in the summer of 2007. The 1920 Revolution Brigades and the Islamic Army of Iraq both began working with U.S. forces and the Iraqi government to fight al-Qa'ida.[39] This split in the Sunni insurgency, combined with the Sunni tribal "awakening," led to significant reductions in violence in Anbar Province and serious losses to neo-Salafi insurgent groups in many parts of the country.

Key Sunni Insurgent Groups

A survey of insurgent claims and statements by various groups, conducted by Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, gives a rough idea of the diversity of insurgent activity in the spring and summer of 2007. The survey covered a wide range of groups, but concentrated on Islamic State of Iraq (ISI-al-Qa'ida), Mujahideen Army in Iraq, Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI), Ansar Al-Sunnah Army, Iraqi Resistance Army–1920 Revolution Brigades, and the Islamic Front of Iraqi Resistance (JAMI). However, as mentioned earlier, since the survey was conducted two of the main Sunni groups, the 1920 Revolution Brigades and the Islamic Army of Iraq, have changed their allegiance and have begun working with U.S. and Iraqi government forces to

fight al-Qa'ida.[40] The Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty survey described the key groups as follows:

Islamic State of Iraq or ISI-Al-Qa'ida

ISI/Al-Qa'ida was known previously as the Mujahideen Shura Council; Al-Qa'ida Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers; and the Monotheism and Jihad Group; all three of which were led by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, who was assassinated by Coalition forces in June 2006. Islamic State of Iraq was established in October 2006, in a likely attempt to gain local support for a group that has a large contingent of non-Iraqi fighters. Other insurgent groups tend to refer to ISI/Al-Qa'ida as al-Qa'ida in Iraq. The terms are used interchangeably.

The group is now led by Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, whom the Iraqi government claims to have killed on May 1, 2007. The group's media outlet pledges to impose Islamic law on the areas in which it claimed authority. The group operates with a significant amount of independence from the larger network of al-Qa'ida. It is not clear that al-Qa'ida central leadership exerts control over ISI/Al-Qa'ida.

Their ideology is "hard-line jihadist-Salafist," including the perspective that jihad is a global struggle between believers and unbelievers. The group targets multinational forces, Iraqi forces, Shi'ite militias, and on occasion, Iraqi civilians. They operate in al-Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din, Ninewah, and areas of Babil and Wasit.

Mujahideen Army in Iraq

The Mujahideen Army in Iraq has been active since 2004. They claim they are only comprised of Iraqi fighters, a few of whom served in the Iraqi Army under Saddam Hussein. It has members who do not claim loyalty to Hussein or the Ba'ath Party. Sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Qaysi, the group's official spokesperson, told al-Jazeera television in November 2006, that the group was formed from an underground religious movement that began prior to 2003. The movement foresaw the fall of the Ba'ath party regime and, in preparation, took arms and equipment from their positions in the Iraqi Army.

The group is a Sunni jihadist-Salafist group, whose primary goal was to install an Islamic government with strict adherence to Shari'a law. It rejected national reconciliation and is dedicated to driving out "occupation" forces. It targets U.S. and Iraqi forces, but says it does not target civilians, including Shi'ites. It operates in Baghdad, al-Anbar, Diyala and Salah Al-Din.

Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI)

The Islamic Army in Iraq was established in 2002 as an underground organization, and officially proclaimed in May 2003. The group consists entirely of Iraqi citizens and claims to be larger than ISI/Al-Qa'ida. Some of its members formerly served in the Iraqi Army, however they were not loyal to the Ba'ath Party. Their spokespeople includes Ibrahim al-Shammari, Ali al-Nu'aymi, and Imad Abdallah.

IAI is driven primarily by the objective of ending the occupation of Iraq. Also, it seeks to eliminate Iranian influence within the country. It advocates negotiations with the United States if the U.S. were to produce a timetable for troop withdrawal and recognize the legitimacy of the Iraqi resistance, rather than portray all fighters as terrorists. Only when these conditions are met, is the group ready to seek to establish an Islamic state in Iraq based on Shari'a law.

IAI targets Coalition forces and Iraqi forces, as well as Shi'ite militias supported by Iran. Al-Shammari stated in April 2007 that the group had killed approximately 25,000

U.S. and Coalition soldiers. The group claims that it is not hostile toward Iraqi Shi'ites, but it saw Iran as a major threat. It does not support attacks against civilians unless they work with the U.S., Iranian, and Iraqi governments. The group also permits attacks on oil installations and vital infrastructure. The group operates primarily in Baghdad, al-Anbar, Diyala, and Salah Al-Din, although it claimed to be everywhere. [This group began cooperating with U.S. and Iraqi government forces against al-Qa'ida during the summer of 2007.]

Ansar Al-Sunnah Army (previously Ansar Al-Islam)

Ansar Al-Sunnah is a self-described "army of jihadists, scholars, and political and military experts," whose goal is the establishment of an Islamic state in Iraq. The Army grew out of the terror organization, Ansar Al-Islam that was established in September 2003. The group is an umbrella organization for other smaller groups, and was comprised of Iraqi and foreign Sunni Arab fighters. It is led by Abu Abdallah al-Hasan Ibn Mahmud.

Ansar al-Sunnah des [does] not believe in "man-made laws" or democratic values. It also rejects negotiations with the U.S. or Iraqi government. Its goal is to establish an Islamic State in Iraq, in accordance with Shari'a law. It targets U.S. and Iraqi forces, including the Kurdish Peshmerga, and those who support such forces, as well as Shi'ite militias.

It operates in Mosul, Baghdad, al-Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk and Salah Al-Din.

Iraqi Resistance Movement–1920 Revolution Brigades

The Iraqi Resistance Movement–1920 Revolution Brigades was established in June 2003. The group was comprised of former Iraqi Army officers, and is an umbrella organization for over a dozen "brigades." The group denies connection to the Ba'ath Party. Its spokesman is Shaykh Abdullah Sulayman al-Umari.

Its primary objective is to drive coalition forces from Iraq and establish a nationalist government with Islamic values, including justice and equality. The ideology of the group is to implement the law of Allah on earth and to rid Muslims of any deviations and non-Islamic practices. It has sworn to continue jihad until they have achieved victory or martyrdom.

It operates against U.S. and Iraqi forces and those who worked for them. It says it does not attack civilians or vital infrastructure, and did not permit attacks on schools. The group claims it has carried out over 5,000 attacks in 2006, killing over 2,000 U.S. troops, and wounding more than 7,000. It operates in al-Anbar, Baghdad and Diyala. [This group began cooperating with U.S. and Iraqi government forces against al-Qa'ida during the summer of 2007.]

The Islamic Front of Iraqi Resistance (JAMI)

JAMI was established in May 2004 and is comprised of a combination of military officers and civilian fighters. The military wing of the organization is called the Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyubi Brigades. JAMI has not targeted Iraqi government personnel or installations, including the Iraqi Army. JAMI's attacks are aimed at Coalition forces and are relatively more sophisticated than other groups. Members of the group were better trained, because of their military experience.

The group is more nationalist than Islamic in its outlook. JAMI rejects the Maliki government and offers of national reconciliation with the current Iraqi administration. It has, however, stated that it would be willing to join a national-reconciliation initiative under certain circumstances.

In March 2006, it released a booklet on jihad in Iraq that emphasized the need to safeguard weapons and warned against individual or small-group confrontation with Coalition forces, because the latter were militarily superior. In May 2007, the group merged militarily and politically with Hamas-Iraq, a breakaway group of the 1920 Revolution Brigades.

Some of these groups have since changed their names and elements of the 1920 Revolution Brigades began to cooperate with U.S. forces as part of the Tribal Awakening. Their structures are anything but stable.

The Changing Role of al-Qa'ida

This complex mix of different Sunni insurgent groups illustrates why the role of al-Qa'ida must be kept in careful perspective. Estimates of numbers and type of attack by insurgent group remained classified. However, a background brief by U.S. military experts in Iraq in early July 2007 stated that al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia was responsible for only 15 percent of the attacks in Iraq in the first half of 2007.

Other Sunni insurgents were blamed for 70 percent of attacks and Shi'a militias were blamed for 15 percent. Shi'a attacks, however, had increased sharply and were estimated to be higher than 15 percent by the end of June. The mid-July Benchmarks Assessment provided by the White House stated, "While AQI may not account for most of the violence in Iraq, it is the organization responsible for the highest profile attacks, which serve as a primary accelerant to the underlying sectarian conflict."[41]

This did not mean that ISI-al-Qa'ida did not remain a critical threat, but simply that it did not dominate the insurgency. The same briefing that produced these statistics pointed out that al-Qa'ida's attacks made up a highly effective 15 percent. Moreover, Brig. Gen. Kevin J. Bergner, the chief U.S. military spokesman in Iraq, stated on July 11, 2007, that ISI-al-Qa'ida was the "principal threat" in Iraq. "They are clearly the main accelerant in sectarian violence and the greatest source of these spectacular attacks that are killing innocent Iraqis in such large numbers. Their numbers are very small, but the effect is very large," Bergner said. He stated that ISI-al-Qa'ida was responsible for 80–90 percent of the suicide bombings in Iraq, many carried out by foreigners, and that some 60–80 foreign fighters infiltrated into Iraq each month to join the organization.[42]

U.S. officers and officials did, however, sometimes spotlight ISI-al-Qa'ida in ways that exaggerated its importance. Bergner also made claims that ISI-al-Qa'ida was subordinate to Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the main leaders of al-Qa'ida, in ways many U.S. experts inside Iraq and in the U.S. government in Washington disagreed with. Bergner argued, "Al-Qa'ida senior leadership does provide direction to al-Qa'ida in Iraq . . . They do establish and provide resourcing and support the network." These statements came at a time when the president and other administration officials were attempting to make the risk that al-Qa'ida operatives in Iraq would attack the United States and its allies if the United States withdrew prematurely from Iraq.[43]

Other experts indicated any efforts to make precise attributions of attacks by attacker were uncertain. Just as the United States tended to say most suicide bombers were foreign, often without any forensic or other evidence, al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia sometimes got the blame for attacks where the true source was uncertain. Moreover, unclassified reporting sometimes implied that al-Qa'ida "franchises" like the ISI were under some form of serious central al-Qa'ida control. Al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia had a stronger Egyptian and Jordanian influence in its leadership than leaders linked to bin Laden and his group. Its membership was also now estimated to be about 95-percent Iraqi.

As was noted earlier, it was also far from clear that Al Qa'ida franchises like al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia were under central al-Qa'ida control. Al-Zarqawi was not a supporter of Bin Laden before he took advantage of al-Qa'ida to give his movement more status, and his movement had largely Egyptian and Jordanian cadres at the top. The overall membership of al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia was also estimated to be about 95-percent Iraqi.

Sunni Insurgent Statements

There is no clear way to estimate the size of these groups, or rank them, although al-Qa'ida is clearly the most violent and serious threat. As Figure 12.2 shows, however, Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RFL) did, however, survey the number of major statements in March 2007, usually attack related, from the 11 most active insurgent groups in Iraq. It is striking to note that the Islamic State of Iraq, of which al-Qa'ida was the leading part, ranked third, with 17 percent.

The RFE/Radio Liberty study also found that insurgent claims of attacks on Iraqis exceeded claims regarding attacks on U.S. and Coalition forces. The survey found that insurgents claimed to have carried out 357 single operations against U.S. and Coalition forces in March versus 296 attacks on Iraqi government forces, 143 attacks on Shi'ite militias, and 439 attacks on Iraqi government forces and Shi'ite militias combined.[44] The more detailed breakout of such claims shown in Figure 12.3 shows that only a few groups concentrated on U.S. and Coalition targets and that fighting Shi'ite militias had become a major priority for a number of Sunni insurgent forces.

Evolving Tactics

The Sunni insurgents continued to evolve and develop new tactics in an effort to cope with U.S. technological superiority. This included steadily more sophisticated use of IEDs, vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs), and suicide bombings. IEDs remained the primary threat to U.S. troops on the ground, contributing to some 65 percent of U.S. deaths, according to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. Insurgents also focused on downing U.S. helicopters in late January and early February. Suicide bomb attacks against Iraqi civilians took hundreds of lives in ethnically mixed areas, despite the increased numbers of Iraqi and U.S. troops.

Figure 12.2 Statements by Major Insurgent Groups in Iraq in March 2007

Insurgent Organization	No. of Statements	Percent of Total
Islamic Army in Iraq	249	26
Ansar al-Sunnah	196	20
Islamic State of Iraq (ISI-al-Qa'ida)	162	17
Mujahideen Army	143	15
Shield of Islam	89	9
Jaysh al Fatihin	39	4
Jaysh al Rashidin	33	3
Just Recompense Brigades	26	3
Islamic Front of Iraq Resistance (JAMI)	14	1
Jihadist Brigades of Iraq	12	1
1920 Revolution Brigades	3	–
Total	966	100

Notes:

—This breakdown reflects statements by the groups involved, rather than their actual activities. Moreover, since a gap of several days often occurs between an attack and a claim, the totals will not reflect the number of claimed attacks actually in March.

—Operations described in composite statements were not included in the first three columns of the table, which is intended to convey the overall impression statements would make on a visitor to the forum(s) where they were posted, rather than provide an exhaustive analysis of the claimed operations.

—The 1920 Revolution Brigades post fewer statements than other groups, and the totals are low but information is included from other Web sites.

Source: Daniel Kimmage and Kathleen Rudolfo, *Iraqi Insurgent Media, The War of Images and Ideas,* Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, Special Report, July 2007, p. 8.

High-profile sectarian targets continued to be a key focus of attacks. A series of attacks in the first week of March targeted Shi'ite pilgrims traveling to Karbala for a religious festival. IEDs and suicide bombings over several days killed roughly 220 pilgrims and wounded many more. Insurgents had attacked Shi'ite pilgrims multiple times since 2003 in efforts to push Shi'ites toward civil war. In this case, al-Sadr had stood down his Mahdi Army to avoid open confrontation with the United States at the start of the new Baghdad security plan, and insurgents sought to again push Shi'ite militias toward sectarian revenge attacks. A spokesman for the Islamic State of Iraq, which claimed responsibility for the attacks, said they were "more successful than we had expected." He also said that two Saudi suicide bombers were responsible for killing 77 of the pilgrims in Hillah.[45]

Insurgents also continued to attack Iraqi security forces. ISF checkpoints and police stations were targeted on a daily basis, and bombs destroyed a number of police stations in February and March. One of the largest attacks occurred on March 18, 2007. Insurgents representing the Islamic State of Iraq disguised themselves as car mechanics and planted several bombs in the garage of a hotel used as an Iraqi Army post in Fallujah. The attack killed and wounded about 20 people and

Figure 12.3 Breakdown of Statements by Iraqi Insurgent Groups in March 2007

Group	Operations against U.S. Forces	Operations against Iraqi Government Forces	Operations against Shi'ite Groups & Militias	Operations against Kurdish Targets	Mixed Operations	Composite Operational Statements	Publication Announcements (Audio, Video, & Text)	Topical Statements	Totals
Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI)	80	105	47	0	9	6	1	1	249
Mujahideen Army	132	4	0	0	0	2	2	1	141
1920 Revolution Brigades	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Islamic State of Iraq (ISI-al-Qa'ida)	13	40	3	6	9	74	0	15	161
Jihadist Brigades of Iraq	8	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Ansar al-Sunnah	44	90	37	6	3	2	5	4	192
Islamic Front of Resistance in Iraq (JAMI)	13	0	0	0	1	0	13	1	14
Jaysh al Rashidin	26	0	0	0	1	0	4	1	32
Just Recompense Brigades	0	15	11	0	0	0	0	0	26
Shield of Islam	20	37	30	0	0	0	0	0	87
Jaysh al Fatihin	21	0	15	0	2	0	0	1	39
Totals	357	296	143	12	25	83	25	28	–

Source: Daniel Kimmage and Kathleen Rudolfo, *Iraqi Insurgent Media, The War of Images and Ideas,* p. 10.

destroyed the building.[46] In another incident, insurgents attacked a police station in Duluiyah, just north of Baghdad, and threatened the five policemen with execution until they pledged to quit their jobs and swear allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq. The insurgents stole weaponry and communications equipment, then burned the station to the ground.[47]

House-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices

House-borne improvised explosive devices (HBIEDs) were a major development in attacks encountered during Operation Phantom Thunder in the summer of 2007. On May 26, Col. Steve Townsend of the 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, heading Operation Arrowhead Ripper in Baquba, said they were faced with an onslaught of house-rigged IEDs, or HBIEDs. The brigade destroyed 21 HBIEDs within the first 12 days of fighting. Colonel Townsend said that insurgents buried bombs beneath roads and attacked troops with small-arms fire, prompting them to take cover in the explosives-rigged houses. The adjoining homes were also rigged, causing a domino effect once the first was detonated. HBIEDs require air strikes or artillery fire to be destroyed, because they are particularly dangerous to infantry.[48]

Sectarian Displacement

Like the Shi'ite militias, Sunni insurgents conducted a campaign of soft sectarian cleansing against other sects and opposition Sunni groups. Documents captured from an aide to Abu Ayyub al-Masri in December 2006 described these tactics. Al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia sought to push Shi'ites out of western Baghdad, followed by the provinces of Salahuddin, Diyala, and eastern Anbar. U.S. intelligence officials said that success of Shi'ite militias in 2006 in preventing this goal led to frustration and disorganization among al-Qa'ida operatives. As a result, insurgents began operating more out of the area in which they were a majority, mainly the belt around Baghdad including Baquba and Fallujah, which U.S. officials said contributed to increased insurgent activity at the time of the U.S. "surge."

A new tactic used in Diyala Province, mass burning of houses, created dozens more internally displaced persons. On March 11, insurgents burned dozens of homes in the town of Muqdadiya. A security official said 30 homes were burned, but witnesses said as many as 100 were torched. One report said that both Sunni and Shi'ite homes were burned, while another said that the neighborhood was largely Shi'ite. Members of the police and armed forces appeared to be singled out. Victims, however, all blamed the Islamic State of Iraq. A spokesman for the self-proclaimed Islamic State said that the attacks had targeted members of the Shi'ite Mahdi Army. Many of the remaining houses were seen flying the Islamic State flag.[49]

Chemical Bombs

Another new tactic was the use of chlorine in bomb attacks against Iraqi civilians. In three attacks in February 2007, insurgent suicide bombers detonated explosive-

laden trucks that also carried canisters of chlorine gas. Some 30 civilians were killed in these attacks, and hundreds were sent to the hospital with chlorine gas poisoning. All of the attacks occurred in the outer ring of Baghdad, where U.S. security was less tight. The bombs did not reflect a new level of warfare of weaponry, but rather showed that insurgents still focused on using readily available resources against Iraqi civilians in "shock and awe" attacks.[50]

Another series of chemical attacks occurred on March 16, 2007. Three suicide bombers detonated trucks carrying explosives and chlorine gas in separate attacks throughout the day. The first suicide bomber detonated his truck at a checkpoint in Ramadi, killing one U.S. soldier and an Iraqi civilian. The second attack occurred two hours later when the bomber detonated a dump truck just south of Fallujah, killing two Iraqi policemen and poisoning some 100 residents. The final attack also occurred near Fallujah; 200 gallons of chlorine gas exploded, poisoning another 250 people.[51]

On June 3, a car bomb exploded outside Forward Operating Base Warhorse in Diyala, discharging a gas that sickened dozens of people. The "unconfirmed report of off-color smoke" that caused soldiers "minor respiratory irritations and watery eyes" was suspected to be chlorine gas. Chlorine began to be used more frequently by Sunni insurgents against U.S. forces.

Complex Attacks

The insurgency was also growing more effective at launching well-coordinated attacks against U.S. troops. In mid-January, insurgents dressed in full U.S. military uniform attacked the provincial governor's office in Karbala. Insurgents regularly acquired ISF uniforms and vehicles, but had never so effectively disguised themselves as U.S. troops.[52] In early February, U.S. troops found a stash of hundreds of American uniforms, flak jackets, helmets, and armored plates in a warehouse in Baghdad. The military was investigating how the insurgents acquired the gear.[53]

Insurgents also attacked U.S. military combat outposts, like the one in Tarmiya, north of Baghdad. Suicide bombers drove at least one car—and up to three—into the compound on February 19, 2007. Witnesses said the cars exploded as they hit the outer perimeter wall, killing two and wounding 29. Additional insurgents entered the compound after the explosions and opened fire. U.S. troops had only entered Tarmiya in December 2006, when local police forces collapsed. Although casualties were minimal, it was first attack against a fortified U.S. compound in some time.[54]

In one offensive in March 2007, insurgents planted 27 IEDs along a one-mile stretch of road, but three-quarters of the bombs were decoys. The decoys stalled the U.S. convoy, and insurgents launched an attack from several directions using rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), mortars, and machine-gun fire. The following battle lasted three days, and the level of insurgent coordination continually impressed U.S. troops.[55]

Insurgent groups operate in small groups, usually three or four. However, sometimes they can organize in groups of 100 or 200 fighters, attacking military forces

after an initial barrage of suicide bombs, intended to "soften up" U.S. or Iraqi targets. The initial attack would then be followed by a combination of IEDs, sniper fire, and cameramen to record and distribute the footage of the attack.[56]

A double bombing occurred in Rabia, about 75 miles northwest of Mosul on June 7. The explosions destroyed at least one building and damaged others. Capt. Mohammed al-Zebari of the Iraqi Army division in the area said, "This is a new tactic for us . . . to start with one explosion and then have the second bigger than the first." The second bomb was made of approximately 500 pounds of explosives packed into a minibus. After a suicide bomber tried to enter the police station and blew himself up, the second bomb detonated.[57]

On June 9, U.S. troops in Baquba averted a suicide bomb attack outside a government building that was planned in two stages. One bomber on foot was wearing an explosive belt, but was shot to death while detonating his device and killing one Iraqi policeman. The second bomber exploded before reaching his target.[58]

Suicide Bombings

From January to June 2007, 280 suicide bombings occurred in Iraq, accounting for almost 5,500 casualties, according to the Initial Iraqi Benchmarks Assessment, submitted to Congress in July 2007.[59] Suicide bombings remained a key tactic of Sunni insurgents seeking to provoke sectarian violence. Gen. David H. Petraeus said that the U.S. military still believed that foreigners carried out 80–90 percent of all suicide bombings.[60] Suicide bombings were averaging 42 a month in the first quarter of 2007.[61]

Attacks on Helicopters

Helicopter operations claimed 5 percent of the U.S. deaths from January to June 2007, accounting for 27 soldiers.[62] Between January 20, 2007, and February 23, at least eight U.S. helicopters were shot down in Iraq. Sunni insurgents had made claims in January that they had acquired new ways to shoot down U.S. aircraft, and in December, a spokesman for Ba'athist groups said that insurgents received new anti-aircraft missiles.[63] Al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia claimed responsibility for three of the attacks.[64] On May 21, the U.S. military said that it had succeeded in breaking up a network of insurgents behind a series of fatal attacks on U.S. helicopters in Iraq over the past winter. There were no fatal helicopter attacks from February until May 29, when two U.S. soldiers were killed when their patrol was hit by a roadside bomb in southern Baghdad.[65]

Infrastructure Attacks and Large-Scale Bombings

The Sunni Arab insurgents continued to attack Iraq's vital infrastructure to undermine the surge and provide increased civil conflict. Typical infrastructure attacks in the spring of 2007 included the following:

- April 12, 2007: A truck bomb killed up to eight people on a major bridge in Baghdad destroying most of the steel structure and sending cars plunging into the river below, police said. Two main sections of Sarafiya Bridge had collapsed. One army officer said explosive charges might have also been used.
- April 14, 2007: A car bomb killed 10 civilians and wounded 15 when it exploded on southern Baghdad's Jadriyah Bridge.
- April 29, 2007: Gunmen set fire to 15 fuel trucks and kidnapped their drivers on a main road near the city of Samarra.
- April 30, 2007: At least two people were killed and 15 were wounded when a bus bomb exploded in a tunnel; it also badly damaged the tunnel, a main road into Baghdad.

After the initial phase of Operation Phantom Thunder came into full force in Baghdad in May and June 2007, there were signs that the troop surge may have caused a shift in insurgent strategy. The increased presence of security forces in Baghdad made large-scale attacks in public places more difficult to carry out. In late May and early June, a drop in car bombings and mass-casualty explosions in civilian areas coincided with a rise in attacks targeting bridges and security facilities. The number of Iraqi civilians killed in mass-casualty bombings fell from 634 in April to 325 in May, according to the Brookings Institute, while high-profile attacks, specifically targeting bridges, became more prevalent. Attacks on police stations, checkpoints, and neighborhood combat outposts also occurred more frequently during this time period. U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Christopher Garver said, "The car bombs you see in Baghdad now are at police checkpoints as opposed to the intended targets like markets . . . where there are a lot of people congregating."[66]

A *TIME Magazine* interview with a Sunni insurgent did not reveal the actual name of the fighter, or his location, but it detailed the technical strategies being advanced by the operative who deals in arms and technical assistance to Sunni insurgent groups, specifically al-Qa'ida in Iraq. The insurgent explained, "Once the Americans were fully deployed, it would be hard to move bombs around, so we had to make them quickly and distribute them." To deal with the surge, many insurgents moved their operations to areas with less U.S. presence. Al-Qa'ida elements moved from Anbar to Diyala, and groups have moved farther north to Mosul, Kirkuk, and Kurdistan. Many elements of al-Qa'ida moved toward the increased U.S. troop presence in Baghdad, away from Anbar. They began to attack nontraditional targets such as helicopters and bridges that connect the capital to other parts of the country. One commander in Baghdad said, "These were all new kinds of attacks, and there were so many of them it was hard to keep track . . . The message from al-Qa'ida was, 'You do your surge, we'll do ours.'"[67]

U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Christopher Garver stated that the shift in strategy signified a "classic goal of any kind of insurgency." "What (insurgents) are trying to do is separate the population from the government and convince the population that the security forces can't protect them."[68] Owen Cote, associate director of the security studies program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said, "The

goal of the insurgents [in bombing bridges] is to demonstrate that we can't be everywhere at once and that they can keep this up as long as the occupation lasts, no matter how much we surge."[69]

U.S. officials suspect that Sunni Arabs are responsible for the large-scale bridge bombings, in attempts to fuel the anger of Iraqis against the central government and the U.S. military.[70] Bridge bombings are also suspected to be aimed at limiting U.S. supply convoy access and to isolate sectarian groups. They also, however, impede the movement of insurgents, who are restricted to ground movement, while U.S. forces can maneuver through the air.[71]

IED Attacks

By July 2007, IEDs had killed or wounded almost 20,000 U.S. troops in Iraq since March 2003. Almost 1,400 Americans had been killed by IEDs since March 2003.[72] Roadside bombs were responsible for four out of every five American deaths in combat during the months of February, April, and May.[73] IEDs were so common because materials are cheap, explosives are simple to mix, and diagrams for wiring are accessible on the Internet. Insurgents have about $3 trillion in new communications technology used to combine and detonate explosives, using cell phones or garage door openers to transmit codes.[74]

According to the Pentagon, IEDs had killed 1,570 U.S. troops in Iraq from the start of the war through May 5, making up 57 percent of the 2,741 total deaths due to hostile action. The number of U.S. forces killed by homemade bombs in Iraq nearly doubled in the spring of 2007, since the beginning of the surge. IEDs accounted for 265 of the 377, or 70 percent, of U.S. troop deaths under hostile circumstances since January 1. In April, roughly half of all casualties were caused by roadside bombs. Marines in Anbar Province started detailed tracking of IED attacks in January 2006 and found that there had been 1,100 attacks on Coalition vehicles during that period.[75] In April and May the share of deaths attributed to IEDs rose to 83 percent. The total number of service members killed by IEDs rose from 39 in January to 78 in April, and 48 in the first 22 days of May.[76]

Deaths from IEDs rose from 25 in May 2004 to 88 in May 2007. In the first 12 days of June, roadside bombs accounted for 69 percent of U.S. troop deaths. IEDs killed 303 of the 516 soldiers who died in the first half of 2007. Marines in Anbar Province started detailed tracking of IED attacks in January 2006 and found that there had been 1,100 attacks on Coalition vehicles during that period.[77]

The U.S. military stated that tips from Iraqi citizens contributed to their ability to disarm roadside bombs before they could detonate. Tips increased from 4,250 in August 2006 to 10,070 in January, defense officials said. According to Gen. Montgomery Meigs, head of Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), this had contributed to the fact that only one in five IEDs found detonated and caused American casualties at the start of 2007. It was not clear, however, the extent to which Iraqi tip increases simply reflected an increase in the number of IEDs planted.[78]

In the summer of 2007, insurgent groups obtained upgraded equipment, including high numbers of powerful IEDs, capable of outperforming explosively formed penetrators (EFPs). They are lined with concrete, and, according to the insurgent interviewed by *TIME Magazine,* are capable of "turn[ing] an Abrams tank into an airplane." The United States believes these were coming from Iran. New IEDs were being buried deeper on the outskirts of the capital along roads where U.S. patrols pass. Some of them were being buried in sewers and irrigation culverts. They were often used to target minesweeping vehicles such as Buffalo counter-IED vehicles and Meerkat mine detectors.[79]

Militants became more adept at hiding and strategically placing IEDs. One account described how insurgents placed an IED in loose rubble, topped with human feces, so that soldiers were less likely to search through the pile. Insurgents began to hide bombs in places where soldiers would most likely take cover—behind a bush or a pile of bricks—and then assault them with sniper fire. Garrett Therolf of the *Los Angeles Times* reported while traveling with a platoon in the Amiriya and Khadra districts of Baghdad that insurgents took advantage of their road-repair efforts by disguising the placement of IEDs as road repairs.[80]

IEDs were hidden in human bodies. On June 13, two people were injured by an exploding corpse that they sought to rescue from a street in the Mansour district of Baghdad. Later that day two other corpses exploded as they were dragged by security forces from ropes, after being advised not to handle them manually.[81] An Iraqi official said, "They know that we can't just leave a body to rot in the street. They are counting on us to do the right thing, then hit us when we do."[82] A battalion commander in Baghdad's Karradah district said that there was an increasing pattern of bombers allowing U.S. patrols to pass IEDs, later detonating them upon the arrival of Iraqi forces.[83]

In late 2004 the JIEDDO was established and has since grown into a defense agency with 358 military and civilian staffers. The organization has been funded with $6.3 billion since its inception and the Bush administration wants to give it $4.5 billion more for FY2008. While the U.S. casualty rate has not fallen since the creation of the JIEDDO, Army Gen. Montgomery Meigs, director of JIEDDO, claims that this is because the troops are exposed to more bombs. In June 2003, insurgents detonated about 500 IEDs, while this March there were six times as many attacks. The exact figure of IED attacks is classified.[84]

After the Defense Science Board reported in April 2006 that the Pentagon's counter-IED efforts had become too focused on the technical, defensive, and adaptive efforts, JIEDDO concentrated more on attacking the networks behind IED attacks, focusing more on jammers and sensor technology.[85] Congress has criticized JIEDDO for not effectively reducing the number of U.S. troop casualties due to IEDs.[86]

The head of the agency, Montgomery Meigs, said that the percentage of casualties due to IEDs has stayed the same, however the increase in deaths from IEDs was a result of an increase in the usage of IEDs by insurgents. Meigs claimed that insurgents have to plant six times as many IEDs to kill the same number of forces. Meigs

said that JIEDDO committed almost all of its current funding as of mid-May 2007.[87] General Meigs also stated, "This is a long-term problem, and it is not peculiar to Iraq and Afghanistan. This is going to be a permanent aspect of our military and diplomatic life, regardless of [what happens in] Iraq and Afghanistan."[88]

The combat approach to defeating IED attacks is three-pronged: (1) defeat the device, (2) attack the network, and (3) train the force. "Defeat the device" refers to the development and fielding of items such as jammers and route clearance devices. Budgeting for this tactical consideration covers jammers, equipment and gear to enable route clearance, as well as research and development for mine resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicles. JIEDDO's greatest expense is the vehicle-mounted Warlock Duke jammer. "Attack the network" refers to technical and human intelligence needed to spot IEDs, while "train the force" refers to the training given to troops before and during deployments in IED defeat techniques, ranging from interrogation techniques to jammer and aerial electronic warfare exercises.[89]

Lt. Col. Gregory Baker, an Air Commander in Baquba, said that the number of IEDs placed in the area rose "exponentially" from July 2006–June 2007, but the number of effective IEDs has remained constant. According to the commander, this is because the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade in Baquba has been successful in eliminating IED placement teams. Also, he said, the U.S. military has stepped up its human intelligence effort to tie IEDs back to their financers, bomb makers, and placers.[90]

Manned and unmanned aircraft were used to track suspected IEDs and bomb planters on key roads and intersections. Surveillance was also kept from towers and tethered balloons. Snipers often shoot people whom they suspect of planting an IED, or follow the suspects to gather more information on their organization.[91] The EA-6B Prowler, a secret aircraft from the Vietnam era, is used to jam small signals put out by IED detonators. Its mission is to control the electromagnetic spectrum so that it remains in the exclusive control of American allies.[92] U.S. troops used Small Unmanned Ground Vehicles to clear caves and bunkers, search buildings, cross minefields, and defuse IEDs.[93]

However, an insurgent interviewed by *TIME Magazine* revealed that he developed a way to surpass electronic jammers by reconfiguring the signal of his cellular phone so that IEDs may be detonated despite efforts by U.S. forces to interfere with transmission signals. The insurgent said, "It took me just one day to figure it out."[94]

Better armored vehicles are being provided, along with flameproof jumpsuits, quick-release seatbelts, and training on evacuating overturned vehicles.[95] Despite the increased efforts to armor vehicles, Meigs said, "Every time you add armor to a vehicle it is very easy for the enemy to adapt." Seven hundred soldiers and almost 100 Stryker vehicles from the Army's 2nd Division were sent to Diyala in March to fortify an infantry brigade.[96] However, an infantry company in Diyala lost five Strykers in less than one week in May.[97] "They are learning how to defeat them," a U.S. official said about Iraqi insurgents.[98]

Strykers can carry two crew members and 11 infantrymen, as well as offer firepower and mobility.[99] In Iraq, where roadside bombs are accountable for a majority

of casualties, heavily armored tracked vehicles are more capable to withstand blasts. Lighter, wheeled vehicles are more appropriate for situations in which the enemy uses more RPGs or small-arms fire.[100]

Lt. Col. Bruce Antonio, who commands a Stryker battalion in Diyala, said that some insurgents found "the right mix of explosives and IED positioning to inflict severe damage on the vehicle." He also noted that tanks have been vulnerable to attacks as well.[101] Insurgents began to reinforce their bombs with cement to channel blasts upward. Bombs are now so powerful that Abrams main battle tanks have proven vulnerable to them.[102] In August 2005 an IED blew up a 37-ton amphibious tractor, killing 14 Marines. Three 70-ton Abrams M1A2 tanks were disabled by IEDs.[103]

In a memo on May 30, Secretary Gates established an MRAP Task Force in order to speed up production of the vehicles, now possessing "highest acquisition priority," for the Pentagon. John Young was named Director of Defense Research and Engineering. Young was mandated to "integrate planning, analysis and actions to accelerate the acquisition" of MRAPs. The Army may end up buying the largest number of them.[104]

On May 31, the Marine Corps announced a $623 million contract to buy 1,200 MRAPs from International: Military and Government LLC. The U.S. Army considered expanding the proposal to buy 7,000 MRAPs to buying thousands more.[105] The Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) asked the Pentagon for enough MRAPs to replace every armored Humvee used by the U.S. Army in Iraq. The total size of the MRAP program was estimated to extend beyond the 23,000 vehicles requested, totaling more than $23 billion.[106]

VBIEDs

Vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices continued to present a challenge to the new strategy. The total number of VBIED attacks increased during the period February 13–March 1 from an average of 1.2 a day to 1.7. Further, the number of people wounded from IED/VBIED/suicide bombing attacks rose from 40.4 a day to 51.2 during the same period. Sectarian murders did drop to their lowest point in a year. The number of average bodies dumped per day fell from 22.8 to 14.3.[107]

Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) spokesman Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell also stated that U.S. forces would begin moving outside the surge area of Baghdad to shut down VBIED "factories." Caldwell said that VBIEDs were assembled in makeshift insurgent factories in the urban belt outside the capital, which included part of the Sunni triangle as well as Baquba, the provincial capital of Diyala Province. He added that in the first month of the new security plan, Iraqi and U.S. troops had destroyed "two or three" such factories. His comments underscored the fact that the United States needed a strategy for all of Iraq, not a single city—particularly when a focus on control of Baghdad could mean leaving most of the country to divide on sectarian and ethnic lines.

On March 14, 2007, a month after the start of President Bush's Baghdad security plan, Major General Caldwell stated that February was an "all time high" for car bombs. A total of 77 car bombs exploded in February, 44 of which were in Baghdad.[108] An additional 783 were killed in March by 108 car bombs throughout Iraq.[109] The U.S. military announced that it shut down a major network of car bombers that were responsible for killing some 650 Iraqi civilians in the past months.[110]

On May 11, truck bombs detonated on three bridges around Baghdad, killing 25 people and injuring 69. The attacks damaged two of the bridges that connect a largely Shi'ite-populated area of east Baghdad to a mostly Sunni area of west Baghdad. The attack came one month after a truck bombing collapsed the Sarafiya Bridge over the Tigris River, killing 11 people.[111]

On May 18, four truck bombs targeting two bridges over the Tigris River near the city of Mosul exploded, killing five Iraqi police and wounding four Iraqi soldiers and one civilian. Later three car bombs attacked a jail, damaging the jail, killing five Iraqi police, and wounding 21 police and 17 civilians.[112]

On May 20, six U.S. troops and an interpreter were killed by a roadside bomb in western Baghdad, while looking for insurgent arms caches. Numbers listed on the Iraq Casualty Count Web site indicate that the roadside bomb caused the highest number of U.S. troop deaths in any single bomb attack this year in Baghdad.[113]

On May 22, a car bomb in a Shi'ite neighborhood in Baghdad killed 25 people and injured 60 at an outdoor market.[114] Lt. Gen. Aboud Qanbar said that Iraqi forces in January, February, and April had acquired some high-tech devices to detect car bombs and were focusing their efforts on uncovering car-bomb factories.[115]

EFPs

One key shift in insurgent tactics was made largely by Shi'ite groups, rather than Sunnis. Explosively formed projectile bombs became a major threat to U.S. and Iraqi forces during 2007. EFPs were made from a pipe filled with explosives and capped by a copper disk. Upon explosion, the disk forms into a slug of molten steel that burns through armor and explodes inside the vehicle, dispersing hundreds of lethal droplets of burning metal.[116]

EFPs were first used by the Provisional Irish Republican Army in the 1970s, and their use proliferated in the 1990s, as they became one of Hezbollah's primary weapons. EFPs were first used with regularity in Iraq beginning in May 2004 in Basra. The Sadrists used EFPs during the 2004 summer and fall uprisings against Coalition forces.[117]

EFPs accounted only for 2.5 percent of all IEDs in January 2006.[118] However, MNF-I spokesman Major General Caldwell stated that since 2004, 170 U.S. troops had been killed by EFPs, 620 had been wounded, and the rate of the use of EFPs in Iraq had gone up 150 percent since January 2006.[119] The U.S. military said that IED attacks dropped 20 percent in the first several weeks of the new security plan.[120] However, the number of EFP attacks reached an all-time high of 65 in April 2007.[121]

A U.S. military expert on IEDs, Maj. Marty Webber, said that the EFPs were made in Iran and smuggled into Iraq, which President Bush affirmed in a Press Briefing on February 14, 2007.[122] Accusations that the EFPs came from Iran stated that they were sophisticated and difficult to make, and the insurgents could not make the more sophisticated types that Iran and Hezbollah had developed and put into use in Lebanon. Further, this meant that insurgents were relying on outside help to carry out attacks, which would point to a marked change from using materials already inside Iraq.

On May 18 U.S. troops captured six men suspected of smuggling materials to form EFPs. The military said in a statement that the group was known for "facilitating the transport of weapons and explosively formed penetrators, or EFPs, from Iran to Iraq, as well as bringing militants from Iraq to Iran for terrorist training."[123]

In an analysis for *Jane's,* Michael Knights wrote, "There is a strong prima facie and circumstantial evidence to believe that Iranian based support included the facilitation of collaboration between Hezbollah bomb makers and Iraq Shi'a militants." Knights added that if collaboration between the two Shi'a armed groups did take place in the making of EFPs, it most likely occurred in Lebanon or Iran.

The majority of EFPs used by the Mahdi Army after 2004 were done so by professional bomb makers who broke with al-Sadr's political wing when he entered the Iraqi government. Several of these Iraqi Shi'a bomb makers were captured in the south in 2005. Other Shi'a suppliers were "middlemen" who imported key EFP-making materials and sold them to high-end users. By 2005 these middlemen had created large-scale networks spreading from Maysan Province—bordering Iran—into northern Iraq. In Baghdad, EFP attacks increased in 2005 from 5 in April to 15 in September. By January 2006, half of all IED attacks involved EFPs, which "frequently employed between seven and nine warheads . . . sustained by the development of fabrication networks in Shi'a eastern Baghdad."

Knights wrote that far less was known about Sunni use of EFPs, which contributed to U.S. casualties in late 2006 and early 2007. Sunni insurgents relied more heavily on shaped charges, because they lacked the formal training that Shi'a groups had gained from Hezbollah. However, U.S. military commanders reportedly found Hezbollah training manuals with captured insurgents, which could explain the rise in Sunni use. Even so, Knights said, "As Iraq's Sunni insurgents have displayed tremendous ingenuity in other fields such as the design, emplacement and initiations of conventional IEDs, or the delivery of suicide munitions, their failure to adopt explosively formed projectiles is likely to be an operational choice rather than a failure to innovate."[124]

Not all sources agreed; the *Los Angeles Times* reported that EFPs were, in fact, relatively simple to make: "Far from a sophisticated assembly operation that might require state supervision, all that is required is one of those [copper, 5-inch diameter] disks, some high-powered explosive (which is easy to procure in Iraq) and a container, such as a piece of pipe." The total cost of creating an EFP was roughly $20, according to a Pentagon specialist. What made them unique and

difficult to spot was their small size and ability to "punch a hole through the armor of an M-1 tank."[125]

The Continuing Role of Foreign Volunteers

Foreign fighters continued to augment the largely homegrown Iraqi Sunni insurgency. The evidence pointed to regional countries—Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt—as the source of most volunteers. But the development of the conflict in Iraq into a larger sectarian civil war offered a different kind of motivation for foreign fighters. Insurgent networks were able to use the Shi'ite militias' soft sectarian cleansing against Sunnis as rallying points for their cause.

Foreign volunteers continued to make up only a tiny fraction of the overall insurgency, but they composed the vast majority of suicide bombers. The number of suicide bombings in Iraq in 2007, roughly 42 a month, made it clear that foreign fighters were still entering the country in large numbers. Iraqi border guards arrested some 15–20 suspected insurgents a month, but estimated that dozens more entered Iraq undetected through the Syrian border.

It was difficult to determine the nationality of many suicide bombers, but a significant number continued to be Saudi, Syrian, and Jordanian. Such volunteers also came from places like Chechnya, Italy, the Sudan, and North Africa.

For example, U.S. military and intelligence officials traced some suicide bombers in Iraq to a small town in Morocco, where residents said that roughly two dozen men responded to al-Qa'ida recruitment propaganda. Moroccan authorities said that some 50 volunteers went to Iraq since 2003 that they knew of. Morocco and its neighbors cracked down on insurgent groups operating in their countries and made dozens of arrests, but they said it was increasingly difficult to contain them. There was also evidence that rivaling Islamic extremist groups in North Africa had put aside their differences and joined together to recruit fighters for Iraq and increased their affiliation with al-Qa'ida.[126]

Syria did increase its security presence along its border with Iraq, but its enforcement procedures sometimes seemed deliberately lax, and the security forces on both sides could not control the now well-established flow of insurgents. The August NIE on Iraq noted that "Syria has cracked down on some Sunni extremist groups attempting to infiltrate fighters into Iraq through Syria because of threats they pose to Syrian stability, but the IC now assesses that Damascus is providing support to non-AQI groups inside Iraq in a bid to increase Syrian influence."[127]

Aspiring insurgents traveled to the Syrian-Iraqi border with the names of smugglers who would take them into Iraq for about $150. If they made it across the border, they traveled to insurgent safe havens and prepared for suicide bombing missions. If they were caught at the border, they were placed in Syrian prisons and eventually sent back to their home countries.[128]

U.S. and Iraqi forces did make some gains against the insurgency at Iraq's borders during the course of 2007. CENTCOM Commander Adm. William J. Fallon announced that the United States was making a renewed effort to stop the flow of

foreign fighters into Iraq. Since 2003, the Iraqi-Syrian border had been the portal for *jihadists* to join the Iraqi insurgency. Fallon said that the help of Sunni tribes in Al Anbar Province allowed U.S. forces to detect and capture the foreign volunteers before they made it to insurgent safe havens.[129]

Iraqi officials stated, however, that the border could not be fully controlled without the help of Syria. Some 15 to 20 foreign fighters were captured along the Syrian border each month, but many successfully entered Iraq. The number of Iraqi border guards had increased sharply in 2005 and 2006, but there were 30 miles between each border fort and the guards lacked adequate technology and equipment. The border also remained a trade route for Sunni tribes, and it was difficult for Iraqi border guards to pick out the foreign fighters.[130] Many U.S. troops remarked publicly and privately in the spring of 2007 that the United States still lacked enough troops to defeat the insurgency, let alone secure the borders.

As is described later, the situation was far worse in the border area with Iran, and tensions between the Iraqi Kurds and Turks remained high. Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) forces continued to shelter in Iraq, and Turkish units continued to operate in Iraq against them.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF SHI'ITE MILITIAS

Shi'ite power continued to increase in Iraq, and with it the power of the various Shi'ite militias. The August NIE summarized the situation as follows:

> Political and security trajectories in Iraq continue to be driven primarily by Shi'a insecurity about retaining political dominance, widespread Sunni unwillingness to accept a diminished political status, factional rivalries within the sectarian communities resulting in armed conflict, and the actions of extremists such as AQI and elements of the Sadrist Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) militia that try to fuel sectarian violence...The Iraqi Government's Shi'a leaders fear that Sunni groups will ultimately side with armed opponents of the government, but the Iraqi Government has supported some initiatives to incorporate those rejecting AQI into Interior Ministry and Defense Ministry elements.
>
> Intra-Shi'a conflict involving factions competing for power and resources probably will intensify as Iraqis assume control of provincial security. In Basra, violence has escalated with the drawdown of Coalition forces there. Local militias show few signs of reducing their competition for control of valuable oil resources and territory. . .Militia and insurgent influences continue to undermine the reliability of some ISF units, and political interference in security operations continues to undermine Coalition and ISF efforts.
>
> . . .Divisions between Maliki and the Sadrists have increased, and Shi'a factions have explored alternative coalitions aimed at constraining Maliki. . .Population displacement resulting from sectarian violence continues, imposing burdens on provincial governments and some neighboring states and increasing the danger of destabilizing influences spreading across Iraq's borders over the next six to 12 months. The polarization of communities is most evident in Baghdad, where the Shi'a are a clear majority in more than half of all neighborhoods and Sunni areas have become surrounded by predominately

> Shi'a districts. Where population displacements have led to significant sectarian separation, conflict levels have diminished to some extent because warring communities find it more difficult to penetrate communal enclaves.[131]

Internal Shi'ite Tensions

As the August NIE noted, the Shi'ite community was increasingly divided along party and militia lines, although the individual parties had their own divisions by leader and many elements of the militias operated on their own or outside any clear central hierarchy controlled by the party leadership. Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and the Badr Organization continued to be the most powerful Shi'ite militias in Iraq. The March 2007 Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report said the following about the objectives of the Shi'ite militias:

> Shi'a sectarian militias have differing objectives, which occasionally lead to violence. JAM, which is associated with Moqtada al-Sadr, conducts attacks and provides services in support of Sadr's efforts to dominate the Shi'a areas of Baghdad and the south. The Badr Organization often works against JAM and in support of SIIC [the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council] and its political agenda of autonomy in the south.

There were "rogue" elements both outside and inside the larger militias. On January 28, 2007, several hundred Shi'ite militants battled U.S. and Iraqi forces just north of Najaf. The fighters were planning an attack on top Shi'ite clerics, including Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, on the Shi'ite Ashura festival. They were first described as Sunni insurgents—based on information that they were attacking Shi'ites—but were later ascribed to a Shi'ite millenarian group called Jund al-Sama. In the day-long fight, U.S. and Iraqi forces killed over 200 militants and confiscated 500 rifles, mortars, machine guns, and Katyusha rockets.[132] Provincial control of Najaf had been turned over to Iraq in December 2006, but Iraqi troops quickly called in U.S. reinforcements.[133]

In the following days, it became clear that many of the Shi'ite fighters were foreign and that they had entrenched themselves for a long battle. Each fighter had surplus supplies of food, clear identification, and they had dug a six-foot dirt berm and a trench surrounding their camp. The camp itself included 30 concrete buildings. The group also had its own books and newspapers, all led by Dhyaa Abdul-Zahra, who also claimed to be the Mahdi.

An Iraqi soldier said that without U.S. reinforcements, the ISF would have taken at least two weeks to penetrate the camp. Both U.S. and Iraqi officials pointed to the success of the battle, which possibly saved the lives of top Shi'ite clerics. Yet it was also clear that even in one of the safest provinces, U.S. forces were still needed and ISF capabilities were insufficient.[134]

The appearance of this small rogue militia in Najaf raised fears that numerous similar organizations operated in Iraq and could carry out attacks against any ethnic group.[135] The planned attack was an isolated incident and it was doubtful that the

group would appear again in the near future, but it did underscore the heterogeneous nature of armed Shi'ite groups and the need for better metrics gauging control of economic and political space.

Clashes between rivaling Shi'ite militias erupted intermittently in the spring. In early May, a dispute at a police checkpoint led to heightened tensions between al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and the SIIC's Badr Organization. (The Supreme Islamic Council in Iraq [SIIC] was formerly known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq [SCIRI].) Iraqi police in Najaf, most of whom were affiliated with SIIC, stopped one of al-Sadr's top aides at a checkpoint. The aide protested his detention at the checkpoint, and Mahdi militiamen soon appeared in the streets of Najaf. Members of the Badr Organization and the police exchanged mortar rounds and some gunfire with the rival militia, but there were no reports of casualties. The tension spread north to Sadr City, Baghdad, where a local SIIC office was attacked with mortars. Politicians from the two Shi'ite blocs also exchanged accusations at parliament meetings the following day.[136] The incident underscored the complexity of the ethnic and sectarian violence in Iraq.

Another clash between rival Shi'ite groups in the south occurred on March 22, 2007. Fighting erupted when members of the Mahdi Army attacked the headquarters of the Fadhila Party in Basra with guns and mortars. They also attacked the office of the governor, who was a member of Fadhila. Fadhila headed much of the local government in Basra and controlled oil facilities, but had recently withdrawn from the Shi'ite coalition in the national government.

A British Embassy spokeswoman said that the violence was "not encouraging." Fadhila and Sadrists downplayed the fighting as a personal dispute. Nine people were wounded and a curfew was put in place.[137] At the very least, the incident drew into question statements by the British military that the south was stable and secure.

Khadimiyah

Shi'ite religious and militia leaders consolidated control in Kadhimiyah, a predominately Shiite district of Baghdad. Despite its position along the Sunni-dominated west bank of the Tigris River, attacks in Kadhimiyah are relatively infrequent. While a Sunni may be killed in Kadhimiyah if he is not under the protection of a resident, Shi'ites find the district to be a sanctuary. At least 2,000 Shi'ite families have fled to Kadhimiyah.[138]

The Mahdi Army helped keep the area secure through "street justice" and a network of informal courts. The Mahdi Army controls most of the district, except a southern area that is controlled by the Supreme Islamic Council in Iraq, formerly known as SCIRI. According to American officials, Mahdi Army members extort money from businesses and doctors in Kadhimiyah in exchange for protection. They also try to enforce strict Koranic values by raiding gambling dens or attacking alcohol vendors. Loyalties to factions change on a day-by-day and block-by-block basis, causing militia leaders, politicians, criminals, and clerics to vie among each other for influence.[139]

Lt. Col. Steven M. Miska, deputy commander of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, charged with controlling northwest Baghdad, said, "The militia influence undermines the rule of law." The concentration of militia rule in Kadhimiyah has encouraged popular distrust of the Iraqi forces in the area. An al-Sadr loyalist was recently nominated to lead the Iraqi Army battalion in the neighborhood. According to American officers, the loyalist had served in the Iraqi forces only for a few weeks and currently maintains ties with the Sadr militia. On April 29, Iraqi forces in Kadhimiyah allegedly passed weapons to Sadr militiamen in order to fire on American troops who had laid siege to the main Sadr mosque. The following day, the Iraqi Parliament voted to bar American troops from approaching the Kadhimiyah mosque within 1,000 meters. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki did not sign the resolution.[140]

SIIC's Nominal Drift from Iran

On May 11, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq announced that the word "revolution" would be dropped from its name, that it would now be called the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC), and that Iran's top cleric would no longer reign as the party's dominant spiritual leader. This change represented a recent move among the party's leaders to shore up support among Iraqi nationalists and U.S. officials.

Jalal al-Din al-Sagheer, a Supreme Council leader in the parliament and a hardline cleric said, "There is no need to talk about revolution anymore . . . The word means change, and we have achieved the changes through the Constitution." It is still unclear whether this nominal change may represent a more significant shift in the party's political platform. For example, the Council continues to advocate a form of government that would allow clerics to override elected leaders and has not renounced its ties to Iran.[141]

Al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army

Moqtada al-Sadr—and the Sadr movement or Office of the Martyr Sadr—continued to pose a serious potential challenge to the United States and the Iraqi government.[142] Al-Sadr's forces had clashed with U.S. and British forces twice before 2007, and al-Sadr was a vocal opponent of a continued U.S. presence in Iraq. At the same time, like all of the Shi'ite and Kurdish factions, he stood to gain if the United States led an effort that effectively secured Baghdad for Shi'ite-led governments, strengthened Shi'ite-dominated Iraqi forces, and then either moved on to attack the insurgents in other areas or withdrew from Iraq.

The Sadr militia did avoid open clashes with U.S. and Iraqi government forces once the surge strategy was announced. On January 24, 2007, Rahim al-Daraji, spokesman for the Mahdi Army and mayor of Sadr City, spoke with Coalition military officials about a plan to avoid armed confrontation under the new Baghdad security push. He said that Mahdi militiamen would not carry guns in public if the U.S. and Iraqi governments agreed to better secure Sadr City. He said

that he represented 14 military and political groups in Sadr City. His proposal appeared to be in tune with al-Sadr's drawdown of his Mahdi Army loyalists. Al-Daraji said that the dialogue would be ongoing, although some of his demands, such as cessation of U.S. military raids in Sadr City, seemed unlikely points of agreement.[143]

Another al-Sadr loyalist in Sadr City, local council head Abdul Hussein Kaabai, said that al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army would "fully cooperate with the government to make the plan successful." Political analysts in Baghdad were divided about whether al-Sadr was making a fundamental political change by standing down his militia or whether he was simply waiting for the departure of U.S. troops to continue a process of soft sectarian cleansing against other groups.[144] Yet an al-Sadr official said that al-Sadr supported al-Daraji but made it clear that the mayor did not represent all of Sadr City.[145] Unfortunately, al-Daraji was shot and wounded by gunmen on March 16, 2007.

A Mahdi militiaman in Sadr City said that all loyal fighters of the militia were told by their respective commanders that al-Sadr called on them to avoid confrontation with U.S. forces and not to carry weapons in public. An aide to Prime Minister al-Maliki said that the government took notice that al-Sadr was standing down his militia, but said that al-Maliki had taken measures to make the "classic insurgency tactic" a failure. The aide did not go into detail about how the Iraqi government was countering al-Sadr's unanticipated actions.[146]

Outgoing MNI-I Commander Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., said in a written statement, "We have seen numerous indications Shi'a militia leaders will leave, or already have left, Sadr City to avoid capture by Iraqi and coalition security forces." Casey acknowledged that the standing down of the Mahdi Army would present a challenge to the Iraqi government and the 2007 Baghdad security plan.[147] It appeared increasingly likely that the offensive by U.S. and Iraqi troops in the capital would encounter resistance from Sunni insurgents and rogue members of Shi'ite militias, leaving al-Sadr's loyalists in the Mahdi Army intact.

In any case, the usually openly armed and uniformed Mahdi Army was far less visible in Sadr City by mid-February. In checkpoints surrounding the neighborhood, men without visible weapons stood in track suits next to police commandos. In previous months, Mahdi members wore black and patrolled the streets with large weapons in plain view.[148]

There was also a controversy over al-Sadr's location at the start of the Baghdad plan on February 13, 2007. MNF-I spokesman Major General Caldwell stated that al-Sadr was in Iran, but al-Sadr's aides denied this. If indeed al-Sadr was in Iran, it was unclear whether he had fled for personal reasons, or for fear of his safety.[149] The U.S. military believed that he was still in Iran a month after the start of the new plan.[150]

The Mahdi Army continued to keep a low profile despite continued insurgent attacks against Shi'ites, including bombings of pilgrims traveling to Karbala for a Shi'ite religious festival. U.S. operations began in Sadr City in the first week of March, and joint U.S. and Iraqi troops were allowed to search homes uninhibited.

Markets in Sadr City were busy, and the usually very visible black-clad Mahdi militiamen had slipped back into the population.

An al-Sadr aide did, however, read a statement in late February emphasizing the need for more Iraqi control over the Baghdad security plan: "There is no good that comes from a security plan controlled by our enemies, the occupiers. If you stay away from them, God will protect you from horror and harm. Make sure your plans are purely Iraqi and not sectarian."[151]

Most Mahdi militiamen, who now seem to have numbered around 60,000, heeded al-Sadr's call to stand down. One Mahdi fighter interviewed by the *Washington Post* said that he wanted to seek revenge for attacks against Shi'ite pilgrims traveling to Karbala in early March. He said that in 2006, the Mahdi Army had secured all the roads to Karbala and no attacks against Shi'ites occurred, but multiple suicide and roadside bombings in 2007 killed up to 150 pilgrims and wounded many more. He added, however, "We are still committed and comply with the words of our leader, Moqtada Sadr, which call for calm and self-restraint."[152] There were, however, hard-line elements in the Mahdi Army that continued attacks and violent sectarian cleansing and these became the target of U.S. forces.

In an interview with *USA Today,* General Petraeus stated that Coalition forces had captured some 700 members of the Mahdi Army during the first month of the Baghdad security plan. The majority of those detainees were most likely rogue members of the militia who challenged al-Sadr's authority. Petraeus also said that the Iraqi government was actively negotiating with al-Sadr's officials in an effort to officially disband the Mahdi Army.[153]

The U.S. military also announced the release of Sheik Ahmed Shibani—al-Sadr's spokesman who had been arrested by the United States in clashes with the Mahdi Army in September 2004. An Iraqi court had acquitted Shibani on charges of weapons possession in 2006, but the U.S. military did not release him. A U.S. military spokesman said that Prime Minister al-Maliki had requested his release several times, and the United States had determined that he could help "moderate extremism and foster reconciliation in Iraq."[154]

Members of al-Sadr's Mahdi Army clashed with U.S. and Iraqi forces on April 6 and 7, 2007, in the southern town of Diwaniya. The United States was conducting missions aimed at capturing Mahdi Army fighters when militiamen began attacking the U.S. troops. A spokesman for al-Sadr insisted that the militiamen were acting out of self-defense and were not defying al-Sadr's order to stand down. Some 39 suspected militiamen were detained, and several were killed in the two-day battle for control of the town.

The Iraqi forces involved in the operation were generally believed to be loyal to the Badr Organization/SIIC.[155] Nevertheless, al-Sadr issued a statement the day after major fighting ended in Diwaniya and the city was still under a 24-hour curfew. He said,

> We see what is happening in Diwaniya of preplanned troubles to drag brothers into fighting and struggle and even killing. My brothers of the Imam al Mahdi Army, my

brothers in the security forces, enough fight among you. This is giving success to our enemy's plans.[156]

Tens of thousands of Iraqi Shi'ites traveled to Najaf in April to mark the fourth anniversary of the ouster of Saddam Hussein and called for U.S. forces to withdraw from Iraq. Al-Sadr had organized the event, although his whereabouts were still unknown. Many of the protesters said they were part of the Mahdi Army and that the only thing stopping them from attacking U.S. forces was al-Sadr's word.[157] The streets into Najaf were blocked in order to prevent car bombings, and the protest took place without any major incidents. There were reports that Mahdi militiamen had clashed with Iraqi police who were trying to prevent them from traveling to Najaf.[158]

The same day as the protest, al-Sadr wrote a statement condemning the continued U.S. troop presence. He also urged Iraqis not to fight each other because he said that was what the United States wanted. Al-Sadr said, "God ordered you to be patient and to unite your efforts against the enemy and not against the sons of Iraq. They want to drag you into a war that ends Shiism and Islam, but they cannot."[159]

Moqtada al-Sadr emerged after almost four months of hiding and delivered a speech on May 25 in the holy city of Kufa in Najaf Province, in which he criticized the Iraqi government for not providing services, appealed to his followers to stop fighting with the Iraqi security forces, and reached out to Sunni Arabs. Al-Sadr opened his speech, chanting, "No, no for Satan. No, no for America. No, no for the occupation. No, no for Israel."

Al-Sadr's speech called for a withdrawal of occupation forces or the creation of a timetable for such a withdrawal, demanding that the Iraqi government not extend the occupation "even for a single day." "To our Iraqi Sunni brothers," al-Sadr said, "I say that the occupation sows dissension among us and that strength is unity and division is weakness . . . I'm ready to cooperate with them [Sunnis] in all fields."[160]

Nevertheless, the Mahdi Army and other Shi'ite militias largely stood aside during the rest of the spring and the summer of 2007 in the areas where U.S. forces operated, avoiding direct conflict. They essentially allowed U.S., British, and Iraqi government forces to fight Sunni insurgents and win their battles for them.

They also, however, continued to push Sunnis out of Baghdad and other mixed areas, often working with elements in the Iraqi government, National Police, regular police, and some elements of the Iraqi Army. Despite al-Sadr's denial that he approved of sectarian cleansing, a former Mahdi Army member living in Jordan told *Jane's Intelligence Review,* "It was very simple, we were ethnically cleansing. Anyone Sunni was guilty. If you were called Omar, Uthman, Zayed, Sufian or something like that, then you would be killed. These are Sunni names and they were killed according to identity." He said that the Mahdi Army was responsible for killing at least 30 Sunnis a day in Baghdad before the new strategy was announced.

It is impossible to be certain of al-Sadr's motives, but al-Sadr may well have felt he had more to win in a relatively peaceful power struggle for a political and economic role in a Shi'ite coalition than having his militia fight a combination of U.S. forces

and the ISF in Baghdad. He faced a future in which outside powers were very likely to largely leave at some point in 2008, al-Sistani seemed to be losing practical influence over events, and al-Sadr may have felt figures like SIIC's Hakim and Prime Minister al-Maliki would fade. Tacitly backing other Shi'ite leaders in using the United States also meant that various rivals or rogue operations in the Mahdi militia that were not directly loyal to him would either lose power or be defeated in clashes with U.S. forces and the ISF. He benefited from their defeat and could exploit that defeat to attack the United States politically at the same time. Al-Sadr also stood to benefit personally if the operation in Baghdad arrested rogue or undisciplined elements in his militia while leaving the rest of his forces intact. This may explain why al-Sadr did not resist the U.S. and ISF operation, although he loudly condemned it, and stood down his militia.

One example of al-Sadr's competition for power with other Shi'ite leaders occurred on August 30, 2007. Al-Sadr and SIIC forces had clashed in Karbala the day before. This clash killed nearly 50 people, disrupted a major religious pilgrimage and ceremony, and the fighting spread to Baghdad. Al-Sadr responded by publicly calling upon his militia to "freeze" its military operations for up to six months.[161] At the same time, al-Sadr exempted operations against "occupation forces" and took this step after the unattributed killing of two provincial governors associated with the SIIC and the killing of two close associates of Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani. Moreover, only a day later—after raids on one of his offices—he announced he might lift the freeze at any time.

The "public al-Sadr" remained unpredictable and opportunistic, and there was no guarantee that the Mahdi Army would not suddenly explode into future violence against U.S. forces or other Shi'ite factions. Sadrist elements continued sectarian cleansing, albeit with fewer actual killings and overt acts of violence, and it was clear that the Mahdi Army might become far more active if the United States withdrew its combat forces.

The Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report for March 2007 defined the goals of the Mahdi Army as follows:[162]

- Force Coalition forces withdrawal;
- Consolidate control over Baghdad and the GOI [Government of Iraq];
- Exert control over security institutions;
- Implement *Shari'a* governance.

Divisions in the Sadr Movement

While the details are far from clear, other events during 2007 made it clear that there were heated rivalries within the Sadrist movement between the political and military wings, both of which believed they were the ultimate source of al-Sadr's power. When rivalries between the two sides developed, the military brigades sometimes took violent action against their own Mahdi politicians, leading to the creation

of rogue death squads who answered to no one. In 2007, the division between the Sadrist politicians and military members boiled down to a disagreement over the legitimacy of ethnic cleansing.

Al-Sadr refused to publicly acknowledge that his movement had splintered into rivaling groups, but his decision in early 2007 to stand down his loyalists—allowing U.S./Iraqi forces to target those who did not lay down their weapons—indicated that he sought to eliminate rogue members.[163] Al-Sadr also rarely reacted to U.S. and ISF operations against the hard-line elements of his militias. He clearly had more to gain in a relatively peaceful power struggle for a political and economic role in a Shi'ite coalition than having his militia fight a combination of U.S. forces and the ISF in Baghdad.

Two Mahdi commanders who talked to the Associated Press stated that the Mahdi Army was splintering. They said that at least 3,000 Mahdi fighters were no longer loyal to al-Sadr and were now financed and trained by the Iranian Qods Force. The commanders said that many militiamen had fled the U.S. surge in Baghdad to Iran and were operating under the alias of an Iraqi refugee organization. Within Iraq, however, an increasing number of Mahdi Army cells were splintering off, but still used membership in the militia as a cover. A U.S. military intelligence official agreed that Mahdi cells appeared to be breaking with al-Sadr, but he could not confirm the relationship with Iran.[164]

Another U.S. official said that at least two Shi'ite rivals were competing for control of parts of the Mahdi Army while al-Sadr was in Iran. U.S. military officials said they hoped to benefit from fewer Mahdi Army attacks and internal arguments within al-Sadr's movement, but also recognized in the long term, the splintering of Sadrists into smaller groups would make them harder to defeat.[165]

Mahdi Army commanders acknowledged in early April 2007 that some of the militiamen were defecting and joining with rogue militia leaders because they opposed al-Sadr's cease-fire. If the Sunni insurgency continued to kill Shi'ites in bombings, Mahdi commanders risked losing control over the militiamen, which would lead to renewed sectarian killings and severely hamper the still new Baghdad security plan.

In May, for example, members of the Mahdi Army in the Hurriyah district of Baghdad chased several Sunni families out of their homes. In response, al-Sadr's committee based in Najaf, which was created to deal with rogue elements of the Mahdi Army, dismissed 30 militiamen in the area. Across Baghdad, at least 600 fighters had been dismissed from the end of February to the middle of May, al-Sadr officials said. Moqtada al-Sadr replaced 11 local leaders of his movement in south and west Baghdad, after leaders from the Bayaa and Amil neighborhoods acted without orders from al-Sadr, attempting to rid their neighborhoods of Sunni Muslims. Al-Sadr's top aide, Salah al-Obaidi, said, "Sayend Muqttada refuses all kinds of violence and he refuses to answer violence with violence.[166]

In another instance, on May 22, a car bomb killed 30 people in a Shi'ite neighborhood, Amil, prompting dozens of Mahdi Army fighters to come and assist the victims, some firing guns into the air and swearing revenge. A few hours later, Mahdi

Army fighters entered the neighborhood of Bayaa and kidnapped a few Sunni residents. That evening Sunni insurgents fired mortar rounds and rocket-propelled grenades into Amil. Gen. Qanbar said that many of the Shi'ite militias that have resumed fighting "are being pushed by outside forces.[167] Haider Salaam, a senior Mahdi Army commander in Hurriya referred to the actions of the rogue elements of the militia, saying, "Yes, this was self-defense, but they exceeded the orders of the commander. Any breach of the security operations will be blamed on the Mahdi Army."[168]

Senior leaders of the al-Sadr movement worried that these defecting fighters were traveling to Iran for training and could potentially clash with al-Sadr loyalists when they returned. One Mahdi commander acknowledged, "It has happened. Iran has approached people. Iran has paid money for people to attack US soldiers. The order didn't come from us." He added that eight Mahdi members had been fired recently for disobeying al-Sadr's command to stand down.[169]

By the summer of 2007, it was clear that the Sadrist movement had become a mix of different elements, including militia units and cells with very different levels of loyalty. These included "Sadrists" who had disassociated themselves from Moqtada al-Sadr when he negotiated with Coalition forces to bring an end to the fighting in April 2004. They included hard-line Shi'ite elements that actively supported violence and aggressive sectarian cleansing of Sunnis, and the violent enforcement of conservative Shi'ite social customs and practices. They included various local leaders and opportunists who joined the Sadr movement to serve their own interests, and elements of the Sadr militia which were little more than hard-line Shi'ite elements, some with ties to crime and extortion and some with links to Iran. Some of the Sadrists involved in sectarian cleansing also now operated housing rackets selling or renting property seized from Sunnis, as well as various services in Sadrist-dominated areas like power, water connections, and trash removal.

These various elements did not operate with any clear hierarchy. They could be aligned with Moqtada al-Sadr, organized against him, or act independently from the Organization of the Martyr Sadr (OMS), with very different degrees of regard for Moqtada's guidance. The groups could also be categorized as either organized political parties, such as Fadhila, organized armies, independent EFP cells, death squads, or criminal gangs.

On June 12, Lieutenant Colonel Garver, military spokesman in Baghdad, said, "We have seen a fracturing of Jaysh al Mahdi in the last few months. We see elements acting on their own. He may be trying to prevent that. It could be a positive thing for Iraq, the coalition and the Iraqi people or it could be a negative thing, depending on how these new leaders are going to behave."[170]

There was another explanation. The steadily intensifying U.S. political debate over the war, and a partisan congressional battle over funding the war, had shown that every Iraqi now had to plan for U.S. departure as a serious contingency. Al-Sadr may have felt that he was far safer in being the Shi'ite voice calling for early departure and riding a rising tide while al-Maliki and others were more responsible and saw the need for a longer U.S. presence. Al-Sadr could also publicly play the

nationalist and seek Sunni support as well as broader Shi'ite support. In doing so, he could ride a wave of public opinion that saw the United States as having failed, Coalition forces as a "threat," and was deeply frustrated with a weak Maliki government. Al-Sadr could stand aside from the ruling Shi'ite coalition even if his representatives in parliament still played a role in it.

Furthermore, unlike other members of the government, al-Sadr could keep his distance from the Kurds, and play the Arab card as well as the nationalist one, without ever explicitly splitting with the Kurds over autonomy. This put him in a better position to exploit any debate over the oil law, federalism, or re-Ba'athification. Unlike al-Maliki and SIIC leader al-Hakim, he could oppose conciliation and support it at the same time. Moreover, SIIC's strength in the Shi'ite south seemed to be slowly diminishing, while the Sadr movement was still a major force.

The Mix of Hard-Line Shi'ite Factions

Important as the Sadr movement was, the Sadrists were only one of the Shi'ite groups involved in civil violence in Iraq at this time. An article published in *Jane's Intelligence Review* on July 1, 2007, outlined the various Shi'ite extremist groups. *Jane's* and other sources report the three major breakaway organizations: the Fadhila Party, the Imam Hussein Army, led by Sheikh Mahmoud al-Hassani al-Sarkhi, and the Khazali network, responsible for the January Karbala attack. Also described are several EFP cells, death squads, and independent criminal gangs:

> ***Organization of the Martyr Sadr (OMS)***
>
> The Organization of the Martyr Sadr (OMS) is led by Moqtada al-Sadr, the son of Sadr II, a renowned Shi'ite cleric killed by the Ba'athist regime in 1999. The OMS formed the Mahdi Army or JAM after the U.S.–led invasion in 2003. An uprising in April 2004 led by JAM grew rapidly and out of the control of the OMS, prompting al-Sadr to negotiate its end with Coalition forces. This action and the political involvement of the OMS in the 2005 government elections, led many followers to be disillusioned with Moqtada al-Sadr's leadership.
>
> Followers were disappointed that they saw limited improvements in their day-to-day conditions, while al-Sadr's political moves seemed to stem from narrow self-interest rather than his espoused populist values. The OMS often released statements publicly condemning sectarian and anti-occupation violence, which further upset Sadrist followers.
>
> ***Fadhila Party***
>
> The Fadhila Party broke away from the OMS on July 16, 2003, when Ayatollah Muhammad Yaqubi declared himself the rightful successor to Sadr II. The Fadhila Party appealed to the religious, urban, intellectual Shi'ites in Basra. It called for strict Islamic law and rejected Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs. When it was pushed out of the Ministry of Oil position in 2005, the Fadhila Party focused its political aspirations locally, seeking to maintain control over the Basra Provincial Council. Basra was governed by Muhammad al-Waeli, a Fadhila member.

The organization was partly funded by oil industry trade unions. They reject the Shi'ite émigré establishment, represented by the political groups SIIC and Badr. The organization's manifesto, therefore is "born in Iraq, Iraqi-financed, with Iraqi leadership."

Fadhila does not have a military group; however, it possesses several paramilitary associations—the Tactical Support Unit, which protects the governor, the Sabah group, which was connected with the Waeli family, and the Oil Protection Force, which was contracted to protect Basra's oil facilities, along with the Southern Oil Company and various tribal security contractors.

Imam Hussein's Army

The Imam Hussein's Army was led by Sheikh Mahmoud al-Hassani al-Sarkhi, a former student of Sadr II, and one who claimed to be his true successor. Al-Sarkhi formed the Imam Hussein's Army in April 2005, formally splitting from the Mahdi Army after several Sadrists were expelled from the Mahdi Army in July 2004. His militia consists of mainly disassociated Mahdi Army members. The group was barred from the Imam Hussein Shrine in Karbala, and most of its violent actions revolved around the shrine, protesting its barring from the shrine.

Sarkhi's followers were anti-Iranian, however they used EFPs. The group attacked the Iranian Consulate in Karbala in July and August 2006, to protest Iranian influence. The Imam Hussein's Army also attacked Coalition forces in 2006 and 2007 with roadside bombs.

The Khazali Network

The Khazali Network was led by Qais al-Khazali, the former spokesperson of Moqtada al-Sadr. On March 20, Ali Mussa Dakdouk, a senior Lebanese Hezbollah operative, was captured in Iraq along with Qais al-Khazali and Ali al-Khazaali, his brother. Bergner asserted that al-Khazali's group, with the help of the Qods Forces, was responsible for carrying out the Karbala attack that took place on January 20, 2007, killing one American immediately and abducting and killing four others.[171] *Aviation Week* reported on June 4, 2007, that a U.S. reconnaissance spacecraft had identified a facility in Iran whose layout duplicated the targeted component.

EFP Cells and Death Squads

There were numerous breakaway groups of Sadrists that carried out attacks against Coalition forces and other Iraqi security personnel and civilians. The Sheibani Brigade, led by Sadrist Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani, consisted of a network of 17 EFP cells. The group was deconstructed; however, al-Sheibani remains on the Iraqi most-wanted list. An EFP cell led by Ahmad Abu Sajad al-Gharawi operated in Maysan, while a Sheikh Ahmed al-Fartusi, a former Mahdi Army commander was arrested in September 2005 for trafficking EFPs in Basra. Other specialist Sadrist cells included the Sayyid ash-Shuhada Movement, the Defense of the Holy Shrines Brigade, the Dhi Qar Organization, and the Karbala Brigade, all of which operated relatively independently from the OMS.

There were also a number of smaller groups that carried out assassinations and abductions. Some of them were closely connected to JAM. The death squad led by Ismail al-Zarjawi, or Abu Deraa, in Sadr City was known for carrying out high-profile assassinations and abductions as well as torturing and murdering Sunni civilians. Al-Zarjawi was publicly expelled from the Mahdi Army; however, he still retained popular support. Other figures such as Abu Maha, Abu Rabi, and Hajj Shibilal-Zaidi were leaders of similar Sadr-related death squads.

Tribal and Criminal Gangs

Several Shi'ite militia groups acted independently of the Sadrist movement, the largest of which were "tribal-criminal syndicates." These groups are funded by criminal activity such as cross-border smuggling, extortion, car jacking, ransom, and stealing. The Hezbollah Movement of Iraq, a Maysan-based militia, is the most well-known group of this sort. The group is led by Abd al-Karim Mahmoud al-Muhammadawi, or Abu Hatim. In Basra, the tribal groups included the Garamsha, a rural tribe that settled in Basra's urban area.

Other criminal groups existed, some of which were Iranian-backed. Many smaller groups carried out violent attacks on Coalition forces for profit, including Thar Allah in Basra. The groups contained members from various militias including Badr, Sadr, and Fadhila.[172]

The Rise of Shi'ite Power in the Southeast

These Shi'ite factions affected the course of the fighting in Baghdad, the Arab-Kurdish fault line, and most mixed areas in Iraq. During the spring and summer of 2007, they also consolidated their control over Basra and the four southeastern provinces in Iraq as British forces largely withdrew to the vicinity of Basra Airport.

Shi'ite militia, tribes, and factions aligned with either the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (formerly SIIC), the Fadhila Party, the Office of Martyr Sadr, or other various organizations struggled to gain greater control over local resources. Intra-Shi'ite violence increased, and the central government and the Iraqi Army largely stood aside. The Iraqi police continued to fail to challenge Shi'ite militias, partly because of tolerance or allegiance to the activities of either party.[173] The province became a "gangland," according to security expert Rosemary Hollis.[174]

To put these developments in context, southeastern Iraq had long been under the *de facto* control of SIIC and Sadr factions. The British had won some tactical clashes in Maysan and Basra in May–November 2004, but Operation Telic's tactical victories over the Sadrists did not stop Islamists from taking steadily more local political power and controlling security at the neighborhood level when British troops were not present.

As Michael Knight and Ed Williams pointed out in an analysis for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, SIIC, Sadrists, Da'wa, and other Shi'ite Islamists had won 38 out of 41 seats in the provincial elections in Basra in January 2005, and 35 out of 41 seats in Maysan, and Basra came under the control of corrupt Shi'ite Islamists in February. The British had decisively lost the south—which produced over 90 percent of government revenues and had over 70 percent of Iraq's proven oil reserves—more than two years before.

Worse, local politics devolved into factions that were not clearly loyal even to their national parties, soft sectarian and ethnic cleansing, and crime and corruption. The Iraqi forces that Britain helped create in the area were little more than an extension of Shi'ite Islamist control by other means. British forces occasionally swept up the mess of crime and violence created by the ineffectiveness of the ISF, but the Sadr forces reasserted themselves in Basra and Maysan by the

summer of 2005, and Iranian influence (and possible transfers of arms and EFPs) continued.

The Iraqi police in areas like Basra became another part of the problem, rather than the solution, with extensive police operations against Sunnis. British efforts to deal with this led to steadily rising local Shi'ite attacks on British forces, putting an effective end to the British soft approach, since British forces could operate in many areas only as armored patrols. To all intents and purposes, the British—who had lost at the political level in early 2005—were defeated at the military level and were confronted with "no go" zones in many areas from the fall of 2005 onward.

The elections in December 2005 made this situation worse by triggering more open inter-Shi'ite power struggles and violence in Dhi Qar, Maysan, and Basra with tribal factions, and rival SIIC and Sadrist police adding to the equation. Even moderate and more secular Shi'ites came under steadily growing threat, while crime and corruption affecting almost every aspect of Iraq's oil industry and exports in the south added mixtures of Mafia-like groups, criminal police officers, and corrupt Shi'ite Islamist elements to the equation. British claims to have transferred responsibility to the ISF in 2006 were little more than a recognition of "defeat with honor" or at least crude political cover.

The end result was that British security efforts devolved to little more than attempts to reform the police in Basra and bring some order to the city. The most British efforts accomplished, however, was to restore a higher degree of control over the Basra police by the Shi'ite parties in the Shi'ite-dominated central government. They did nothing to either quell attacks on British forces or bring security to areas outside Basra.

By the beginning of 2007, British forces conducted few operations and most had limited impact. They did, however, carry out a small security effort called Operation Troy in southern Iraq that coincided with the start of the Baghdad security plan. British forces in Basra—with the help of Iraqi National Police, local police, and border patrol troops—secured a perimeter of checkpoints around the southern part of the city and closed off two border crossings with Iran at Sheeb and Shalmacha.

A British military spokeswoman said the goal of the crackdown was "to halve smuggling and contain criminal and rogue militia operations." The border crossings were closed for 24 hours, starting on February 15, 2007. Iraqi police searched every vehicle entering and exiting the city for illegal arms, and Royal Marines patrolled the Shatt al Arab waterway. Other border crossings into Iran and Syria would remain closed indefinitely.[175]

Once the majority of the border crossings reopened, however, British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that he would withdraw up to 1,600 of the total 7,000 British troops stationed in southern Iraq in coming months, with 3,000 gone by the end of 2007. Britain stated the security conditions in the south, and in the second largest city of Basra, had stabilized and Iraqi forces could take full control.[176]

The Pentagon's March 2007 Quarterly Report to Congress assessed the south differently. It stated that the conflict in the south was "characterized by tribal rivalry; factional violence among SIIC/Badr Organization, the Office of the Martyr Sadr/

JAM, and smaller militias for political power; and attacks on Coalition forces." This assessment underscored the lack of real security in the south and helped explain Secretary Gates's emphasis on Shi'ite versus Shi'ite conflicts as one of the four major sources of conflict and division in Iraq.

British troops in southern Iraq continued to hand over control to Iraqi forces in the spring of 2007. On April 18, 2007, Britain officially handed over control of Maysan Province, bordering Iran. It was the third British province to be transferred. British officers maintained that reducing their troop presence would reduce the tensions in the south. One officer said, "Ninety percent of the violence down here is all against us. You put more people on the ground, you are creating more targets."[177]

The June 2007 version of the Department of Defense report on "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" described the ongoing struggle among Shi'ite groups to fill the power vacuum left by the British as follows:

> The security situation in southern Iraq is characterized by competition between various Shi'a militia, factions, tribes and organized criminals aligned with various parties positioning themselves for greater influence over local authorities and resources. Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (formerly SIIC) (SIIC) maintains a strong political presence in the south. Increased political competition between SIIC and the Office of Martyr Sadr (OMS), the political arm of JAM, has resulted in clashes between their respective armed wings, the Badr Organization and JAM.
>
> Some JAM members relocated to the south in response to FAQ [Fardh al-Qanoon] in Baghdad, further empowering JAM in confrontations with both Badr and provincial authorities. In Basra Province, the OMS and the governing Fadilah Party vie for dominance over local economic activity, adding to the intra-Shi'a violence.
>
> This intra-Shi'a violence has contributed to a significant increase in attacks against Coalition forces in Basra and an observed greater hostility towards Coalition presence, as well as highlighted the failure of the Iraqi police to challenge Shi'a militants in southern Iraq. In Diwaniyah, however, a reported increase in JAM presence and aggression prompted local officials to request military action to lessen JAM's influence and local control. Relatively little AQI activity has been observed in southern Iraq.[178]

The rising level of violence in the south forced the Coalition to react in spite of the British desire to cut the level of British activity. On May 25, British troops and Iraqi Special Forces troops killed Wissam al-Waili, also known as Abu Qadir, the leader of the Mahdi Army militia in Basra, while attempting to detain him. The clash took place in Jumhoriyah, a middle-class, residential area. The killing was followed by three hours of continuous retaliatory fire from the Mahdi Army militia on British positions in Basra.[179] Five other people, including Qadir's younger brother, also died in the incident, and 15 people were wounded.[180]

On June 4, militiamen from the Mahdi Army fought Iraqi soldiers and police in Diwaniyah, as security forces conducted raids in the city, while U.S. aircraft flew overhead. The fighting killed one Iraqi soldier and wounded 16 other people.[181] Al-Sadr's spokesman said that the clashes occurred when the Iraqi police violated a

signed truce by attempting to arrest Kifah al-Kuraiti, a local militia leader. The Iraqi police said the arrest was carried out with a warrant.[182]

Operation Marne Torch began on June 15 and engaged in areas that were previously untouched by Coalition forces for the previous three years. The operation began in the area near Arab Jabour along the Tigris River and included additional operations to prevent al-Qa'ida from moving into Baghdad and Baquba. The operation was being carried out by four brigade combat teams, including two infantry divisions, an airborne brigade, and a mountain division. Very few Iraqi security forces were participating in the operation. However, Sunni militias were being allowed to occupy areas as a "neighborhood watch."

The operation focused on the Arab Jabour region belonging to Doura, a Sunni-dominated suburb south of Baghdad. The region along the Tigris River was the first target of the operation, where the military blew up 17 boats as of June 24. The airborne division in Operation Marne Torch also used "a fair number" of air strikes by B-1 bombers to destroy entire roads in the area, believed to be used by insurgents. U.S. troops also blocked the exit routes from the city, preventing insurgents from escaping. On June 22, Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno said the units were successful in killing or detaining 100 enemy fighters.[183]

On June 24, the U.S. Army reported that 4 American soldiers died in the operation and 26 had been seriously wounded. Nine Iraqi Army troops and 8 Iraqi police were killed and about 40 Iraqi security forces were injured. Twelve enemies were killed in action, and 142 were detained, including 30 high-value detainees. Forty-eight IEDs were found and 4 weapons caches were cleared. The operation was expected to last through at least the end of July.

A Partial Power Vacuum in Basra and the Southeast

As time went by, the shrinking British position in the south, the weakness of the central government, and the U.S. focus on defeating al-Qa'ida and securing Baghdad created a partial power vacuum in much of southeastern Iraq. This problem increased at the end of the summer. On September 2, 2007, British troops began withdrawing from the Basra palace, handing over control to the Iraqi Army.[184] The palace compound had been targeted by almost daily rocket and mortar attacks. These troops were the last major British presence in the city, Iraq's second largest. The troops withdrew to an air base nearby, where most of Britain's soldiers were stationed. While British officials portrayed the move as transitioning British troops into more of an "overwatch" role, others disagreed. According to Majed al-Sari, an advisor to the Ministry of Defense for the southern region, "This withdrawal is a clear indication of the failure of British forces in dealing with security."

A report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), released on June 25, 2007, stated that the primary difficulty in establishing order in Basra came from the "inability to establish a legitimate and functioning provincial apparatus capable of redistributing resources, imposing respect for the rule of law and ensuring a peaceful transition at the local level."[185] The feuding among political parties that emerged in

the aftermath of the Samarra mosque bombing in February 2006 had significantly worsened, in spite of British efforts to strengthen the capacity of the local government and security forces.

The ICG report stated that Basra's residents had historically distrusted the central Iraqi government, since the reign of Saddam Hussein. Basra's resources had been exploited for the benefit of the country, while the province had been denied an equal share of political representation and funding. Basra had 12 seats in the Iraqi National Assembly, whereas much smaller and less populated provinces possessed more representatives. However, the region produced around 80 percent of the country's economic wealth, according to a Basra parliamentarian.[186]

It said that American pressure on the Iraqi prime minister to disarm militias in effect increased the efforts of militias to infiltrate the security forces in Basra. Since 2006, murders and assassinations carried out by uniformed members of the Iraqi security forces increased significantly.[187] Political parties have played a role in oil smuggling, as well. Fadhila, which controls the Oil Protection Force, has been accused of embezzling the oil it is supposed to monitor. The IGC reports, "Trafficking in Basra has given rise to a gigantic and highly sophisticated mafia, comprising smugglers, middlemen, accomplices within the oil ministry and so forth."[188]

It also said that the province had been dominated by warring Shi'ite political factions since the election of January 2005, vying for political power and resources. The al-Fadhila party, the SIIC (formerly SIIC), and Tha'r Allah, a local party, had used political leveraging, violence, local alliances, and economic ploys to gain influence in the region.[189]

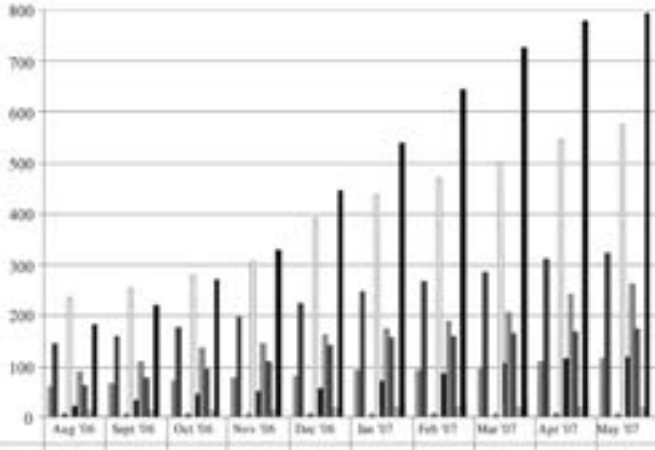
The ICG report acknowledged that any order that existed in Basra was limited to "a balance of power between militias." Local alliances, or "marriages of convenience," have defined that balance of power, where the rule of law is not respected or enforced by security forces. One local alliance was formed among tribal leaders, for example, ensuring that crimes committed on behalf of political parties would not be tolerated. These types of informal agreements simultaneously reduced violence and "render it tolerable," working to undercut government authority while legitimizing the circumstances that perpetuate intra-militia fighting.[190]

The ICG report also cited a suspicion among Basra residents, security officials, and British forces that Iran has played a large role in the province. One Iraqi university professor said in an interview, "Iranian intelligence has established a presence in the Iranian consulate, humanitarian associations, businesses and pro-Iranian political parties."[191]

Figure 12.4 shows a cumulative summary of attacks in the southern city of Basra through May.

THE KURDISH DIMENSION: COMPROMISE OR TIME BOMB?

The key issues for the Kurds remained separating the country into autonomous regions, control over oil resources, the issue of Kirkuk, and relations with Turkey. The Kurds continued to remind Iraq's national government that they



	Aug '06	Sept '06	Oct '06	Nov '06	Dec '06	Jan '07	Feb '07	Mar '07	Apr '07	May '07
IED Found	59	66	70	78	81	90	92	97	108	113
IED Attack	145	159	177	197	224	246	267	286	312	321
VBIED Found	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
VBIED Attack	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
EFP	213	253	279	304	390	437	470	502	546	574
EFP Mortar	22	33	44	52	57	73	86	106	115	120
EFP Rocket	88	108	134	146	161	176	190	206	242	263
RPG Attack	62	78	96	109	143	155	158	163	170	173
Grenade	13	14	14	14	15	15	16	16	16	16
SAF Attack	182	222	270	330	447	539	644	727	780	792
Suicide Bomber	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	5	5	5

Source: Material adapted from information provided Hans Fah, a security and intelligence consultant working in support of private sector reconstruction programs in Iraq. Data have been drawn from both open source and on the ground protective security networks. Personal correspondence of the author, May 15, 2007. Used with permission. Not official US government data.

Figure 12.4 Cumulative Summary of Attacks in Basra through May 2007

were cooperating and participating in the reconciliation dialogue on a voluntary basis only.

In late January 2007 the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) representative to the United States, Qubad Talabani, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Talabani said the key issues facing Iraq were as follows:

> Resolving and passing Iraq's National Oil, Revenues Sharing and budget laws; revising and implementing a sound de-Ba'athification policy; devising an amnesty program that separates terrorists from those who have legitimate grievances; taking necessary steps to disarm and bring to justice death squads and rogue militias; and addressing, once and for all, the tense issue of Kirkuk and its future.

Talabani also reaffirmed the Kurdish position that federalism would ultimately bring "long term, sustainable political settlement in Iraq." He said that as long as central power rested in Baghdad, violence would continue.

On the issue of oil, Talabani said that he supported the draft oil law, made public in early January and approved by the Iraqi cabinet in late February, as long as regions retained the ultimate right to make and sever contracts. He agreed with the law that oil revenues should be distributed to regions based on population and that a national oil policy had the potential to bring stability and peace to Iraq.

Finally, Talabani said he hoped that the United States would not interfere with the constitutional mandate that Kirkuk hold a census and referendum for inclusion in Kurdistan in 2007. Talabani's emphasis on the federalism issue, however, showed Kurdish priorities.[192]

The KRG also reported plans to triple the number of foreign oil companies in the region by the end of 2007. The Kurdish Energy Minister, Ashti Hawrami, said that the KRG was in discussion with a Norwegian company and two American oil companies. He said the goal was to have 15 foreign contractors operating in Kurdistan. The oil law was suspected to be approved by parliament by May 2007, but the KRG said it would continue with plans to expand the number of foreign companies regardless of the status of the law. He also said that the KRG supported sharing oil revenues with the central government to distribute throughout the country.[193]

The June 2007 Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report said the following of the security situation in the northern Kurdish region:

> The overall security situation is stable in Dahuk, Irbil, and Sulaymaniyah, and several foreign countries are establishing consulates and pursuing oil and energy business interests in the Kurdish region. However, the attack on May 9 against the Kurdish Ministry of Interior in Irbil demonstrates that AQI maintains its ability to strike in the Kurdish region.
>
> Violence occurs mostly in outlying areas near the border with Iran. Traditional conflicts with Ansar al-Sunnah (AS) have ebbed and flowed in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) region since the mid-1990's. The newly formed Brigades of Kurdistan announced their intent to attack the Kurdish government but the capabilities of the group is unknown. While AQI's increased presence in northern Iraq is of growing concern, AQI largely conducts its anti-Kurdish operations in Kirkuk and Mosul, rarely venturing to more remote areas in the region in large part due to the presence of Kurdish security forces.
>
> The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has provided relatively good governance over the three Kurdish provinces. The existence of the Kongra Gel (KGK) and the potential for border skirmishes with Turkey or Iran, and in the case of the KGK, possible cross-border operations by the Turkish Army, are issues that could increase tensions in the Kurdish region.

The Issue of Kirkuk

The struggle for Kirkuk remained important and unresolved in the first several months of 2007. In mid-January 2007 the United States rejected Turkey's call for delaying the referendum planned for November 2007. Turkey—along with Iraq's Turkomans and Arabs—argued that the roughly 100,000 Kurdish refugees in Kirkuk

unfairly altered the demographics. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, "Turkey cannot just sit idly and watch the demographic structure of Kirkuk change," and called for delaying the referendum at least five years. The United States, however, maintained that the date of the referendum was in Iraq's constitution and therefore only the Iraqi government could change the date. The referendum issue clearly heightened tensions between Ankara and Washington.[194]

In the last reliable census, taken as long ago as 1957, Turkomans had made up 40 percent of the population, Kurds composed 35 percent, Arabs 24 percent, and Christians 1 percent. During Saddam Hussein's regime, the number of Turkomans and Kurds dropped dramatically in his Arabization campaign, but exact numbers were unknown. U.S. and Iraqi officials estimated that some 350,000 Kurds have returned to the Kirkuk area since 2003.

This led some to warn that violence in Kirkuk would increase leading up to the census scheduled for July 2007. Gen. Anwar Mohammad Amin, the top Iraqi commander in Kirkuk, said, "We expect increased violence the closer we get to the referendum." Iraqi officials said they were increasingly concerned about the activities of the two main Sunni insurgents groups operating in Kirkuk—Ansar al-Sunna and the Islamic Army in Iraq.

Kurdish officials began offering Arabs incentives to forfeit voting rights for the referendum. Arabs would receive $19,000 if they moved from their homes and gave up their voting rights.[195] Further, in late March 2007 the central Iraqi cabinet approved a decision to pay Arab families $15,000 each to leave Kirkuk. The offer would be extended to Arab families that had been forced to move to Kirkuk during Saddam Hussein's Arabization campaign; they would be given a piece of land in their original towns. Despite deteriorating economic conditions, however, it was unlikely that many Arab families would voluntarily relocate, effectively giving Kirkuk to Kurdistan.[196]

Violence in Kirkuk did start to escalate as the July 2007 census date approached. For example, on April 2, 2007, a suicide bomber exploded his truck at a police station near an elementary school, killing 15 and wounding 87, including schoolgirls.[197] Various sources described the security crisis and ethnic tensions in Kirkuk in the spring of 2007 as a "mini-Baghdad." In reality, however, ethnic conflict in Kirkuk had been steadily escalating since 2003, but had been repeatedly overlooked as part of the calmer northern Iraq region of "Kurdistan."

Lt. Col. Michael Browder said that tensions were high in Kirkuk and a single attack with mass casualties would be enough to spark clashes. Browder said, "Everybody's right on the envelope." In such a scenario, Kurds could clash with Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs who are already warring with each other, and neighboring Turkey could potentially invade to protect Kirkuk's Turkish residents.

Lieutenant Colonel Browder asserted that a large-scale bomb attack on a Kurdish civilian target would trigger Kurdish leaders to send Peshmerga battalions into Arab areas of Kirkuk, igniting a sectarian battle similar to that between Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs in Baghdad. Though in late April a Kurdish family of four was killed in its home, the Kurdish response was restrained. Army Lt. Col. Sam Whitehurst, deputy

commander of the 3rd Brigade, 255th Infantry Division, which oversees the Kirkuk area, explained the limited Kurdish response as a concern for international support. The Kurds know that if they respond in kind to such acts, they would lose their ability to claim international support for the Kurdish control of Kirkuk.[198]

Howard Keegan and Lt. Col. Chris Brady, of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kirkuk, said that there may be tension among groups in Kirkuk, but "for the most part there is no more than in any multiparty system that lends itself to political squabbles in hopes of obtaining strategic advantage for a bloc. . . Many people in Kirkuk get along with each other—regardless of their sect or ethnicity—and intermarriage is common."[199]

An International Crisis Group report issued in mid-April described the security challenges in Kirkuk as follows:

> Today Kirkuk resembles Baghdad in miniature, with shops shuttered in the normally teeming downtown market area, and Arabs, Kurds, Turcomans and Chaldo-Assyrians hunkered down in neighborhoods which, while not entirely segregated, are distinctly hostile to members of whatever community happens to be the minority. Violence at first predominated downtown, where communities commingled, as well as in areas inhabited by the *Wafidin* (Arab "newcomers" settled in Kirkuk as part of previous regimes' Arabisation campaigns). But in February 2007 it moved into the heart of Kurdish neighborhoods as if to show that the Kurdish parties' control over Kirkuk's security apparatus did not guarantee safety for the Kurdish civilian population.[200]

The Referendum Problem

Despite calls from Arabs, other ethnic minorities, and Turkey, the Kurds continued to push for the referendum at the end of 2007—a debate in which the United States was largely absent. The referendum on inclusion into the northern region of "Kurdistan" was included as Article 140 in the Iraqi constitution, which itself was based off of the 2004 Transitional Administration Law. Article 140 of the constitution detailed a three-step process on the Kirkuk issue: normalization, census, and reformation.

In August 2006, Prime Minister al-Maliki had created a committee to implement Article 140, but it failed to agree on any major issues, with the exception of providing monetary compensation to those *Wafidin* who agreed to leave Kirkuk and annulling land given to the *Wafidin* during "Arabization" (the Committee notably lacked a representative from the *Wafidin* community). These proposals encountered problems, however, when the parliament in Baghdad called the measures "unconstitutional." The Shi'ite United Iraqi Alliance was deeply divided on the issue: SIIC largely favored normalization—in return for Kurdish support of a Shi'ite southern region—but the other Shi'ite parties largely opposed the measures.

Opponents to the referendum argued that the events since 2004 necessitated postponing the December 2007 deadline. As the International Crisis Group report describes, the Kurds and their opponents became obsessed with a "numbers game" as time progressed:

> The fiercest disputes concern the alleged influx of Kurds (including non-Iraqis, according to the Kurds' detractors), and the alleged expulsion of Arabs. The fact that there appears to be no strong evidence of either new Kurdish arrivals (the opposite may even be true) or fresh Arab departures is, in this inflamed context, immaterial.[201]

Technically, the "normalization" process had to be completed before either the census or referendum could take place. Normalization was created to reverse the demographic trend created during Saddam Hussein's Arabization campaign that forced hundreds of thousands of Kurds out for the city. The issue, however, was that many of the Arabs relocated to Kirkuk in the previous decades (*Wafidin*)—the majority of whom were Shi'ites—did not take the monetary incentive offered them to leave Kirkuk.

The International Crisis Group described the general Kurdish approach to normalization as follows:

> The Kurds, while expressing anger over past sufferings at the hands of *Wafidin* who served in the security apparatus, have acted with restraint since returning in April 2003 to the city and other areas to which they lay claim. Expulsions occurred in some of these areas (for example, Khanaqin), but they have been the exception and may well be attributed, as Kurdish leaders maintain, to overzealous local commanders who were subsequently reined in (albeit not punished). Instead, the Kurdish approach has been to nudge out the *Wafidin* by making them feel unwelcome and depriving them of jobs, while plying them with offer of money and gifts of land elsewhere in Iraq. (The money and land are supposed to be provided by the Iraqi government.) As one Kirkuki politician said: "Those who came here for money are likely to leave for money as well."
>
> . . . Some have accused the Kurds of inducing *Wafidin* to leave through a campaign of intimidation and detention. The reality seems closer to a Kurdish effort to create an environment in which the Wafidin no longer feel welcome in Kirkuk. Whatever their methods, Kurdish leaders have made clear that while they may not be able to push out all the *Wafidin,* they intend to deprive those who remain of the right to vote in Kirkuk.[202]

Another element of the debate was whether or not to include districts in the proposed Kirkuk Province that had been severed during Arabization. These districts were ethnically Kurdish and the Kurds favored their inclusion, but the minorities were strictly opposed. The Committee had made no progress on the issue as of April 2007.

Despite the lack of progress on normalization, the Kurds continued to push the referendum. The two largest minorities, the Arabs and the Turkomans, opposed it and some factions threatened violence if the Kurds proceeded as planned. The main complaints of these minorities were that the Kurds were manipulating them and did not plan on giving them much say or protection in the proposed Kurdish constitution.

If the Kurds do not back down from the November 2007 referendum, it is unclear who will have the right to vote or what exactly the question on the ballot will be. Further, the United States has largely remained uninvolved, to the dismay of Turkey.

The timeline for addressing the problem at a logistical level was very tight, and the security situation in Kirkuk was likely to exacerbate the challenges.

The International Crisis Group report explained that the stakes of failure were very high. Sectarian violence had the potential to draw fighters from the Kurdish Peshmerga, Shi'ite militias, the Sunni insurgency, and potentially Turkey. Moreover, the Kurdish leadership would most likely blame dissension and inaction in Baghdad for the crisis and could withdraw from the coalition government.

The Turkish Question

Tensions between the Kurds and Turkey continued to escalate in the winter and early spring of 2007 as a result of Kirkuk and the issue of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul reiterated Turkey's objections to Kirkuk being included into Kurdistan. Gul said that it was important for the Kurds to remember that Turkey provided northern Iraq with electricity and 90 percent of its refined oil. He also urged U.S. action against PKK rebels and said that he would not accept a double standard; Turkey provided troops to Afghanistan.[203]

There were reports that Kurdish officials were seeking direct reconciliatory talks with Turkey. In late February the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, one of the two Kurdish parties making up the KRG, Massoud Barzani, called for direct talks with Turkey over the issue of the PKK. Barzani said, "Dialogue is the best way to resolve problems and understandings. We must talk face to face to understand each other's position. This will be followed by [discussions on] what should be done and necessary actions . . . We are extending to Turkey a hand of friendship. We will be pleased if Turkey responds in kind." He denied that the KRG supported the PKK, but urged Turkey to follow political ends to curbing PKK rebel activity. Barzani, however, rejected Turkish calls for postponement of the referendum scheduled for Kirkuk in July 2007.[204]

In his January 10, 2007, speech, President Bush vowed to work with Turkey against the PKK. A week after the president's speech, U.S. and Iraqi troops raided the Mahmour refugee camp in northern Iraq, which Turkey believed was a PKK safe haven. Under Secretary of State R. Nicholas Burns said that the raid marked the beginning of a U.S. crackdown on rebel activity and better relations with Turkey. Turkey's Foreign Ministry welcomed the attack and said, "We desire a continuation of such steps . . . in the context of our hope for an end to the presence and activities of the PKK terrorist organization in Iraq."[205] There did not appear to be any follow-up attacks, however, and cracking down on the PKK was clearly not a U.S. priority in the early spring of 2007.

In March, Turkey reiterated the need for the United States to take action against the PKK and pledged Turkey's own military intentions against a suspected PKK spring offensive. Foreign Minister Gul and Turkish military officials said in late March that 3,800 PKK rebels were planning an attack in southeast Turkey. Gul stated,

> We will do what we have to do, we will do what is necessary. Nothing is ruled out. I have said to the Americans many times: suppose there is a terrorist organization in Mexico attacking America. What would you do? . . . We are hopeful. We have high expectations. But we cannot just wait forever.

In response to Turkish concerns, Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried said, "We are committed to eliminating the threat of PKK terrorism in northern Iraq." But U.S. special envoy to the PKK Gen. Joseph W. Ralston admitted, "We have reached a critical point in which the pressure of continued PKK attacks has placed immense public pressure upon the government of Turkey to take some military action." Turkish Special Forces began conducting operations in Khaftanin and Qanimasi in northern Iraq to deter PKK attacks. A PKK leader threatened that war would come unless Turkey removed the forces. Public pressure in Turkey was also forcing Prime Minister Erdoğan to take action before upcoming elections.

In early April, the leader of the KRG, Massoud Barzani, angered Turkey when he said, "Turkey is not allowed to interfere in the Kirkuk issue, and if it does, we will interfere in Diyabakir's affairs and other cities in Turkey." Kirkuk is a majority ethnic Turkoman city in northern Iraq, while Diyarbakir is a majority Kurdish city in southeastern Turkey. Barzani added, "There are 30 million Kurds in Turkey, and we don't interfere there. If the Turks interfere in Kirkuk over just thousands of Turkmen, then we will take action for the 30 million Kurds in Turkey." The Turkish Prime Minister responded to Barzani by saying that he had "exceeded the limits" and would be "crushed by his own words." The United States also stated that Barzani's comments were not particularly "helpful" in amending relations between northern Iraq and Turkey. The statements by Barzani also contributed to a decision to move the second meeting of an international conference on Iraq from Istanbul to Egypt.[206]

Turkish Chief of General Staff Yasar Buyukanit said on April 12, 2007, that "from the military point of view, an operation in northern Iraq must be made." Prime Minister Erdoğan did not comment on the general's statement, but it did provoke criticism and calls for calm from the European Commission and the United States.[207] According to Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Levent Billman, on May 12 Iraqi government officials affirmed "its intention to cooperate on the issue of PKK terrorism."[208]

In late May two attacks on Turkish targets were attributed to the PKK. On May 22, a suicide bomb in Ankara killed six people and injured 60. On May 24, a remote-controlled land mine in the Sirnak Province in southeast Turkey killed Turkish soldiers. Following these attacks Prime Minister Erdoğan announced that he would support any Turkish military incursion in Iraq against the PKK and secure parliamentary authorization if the Turkish Army sought to carry out such a border operation.[209] On May 28, Mahmoud Qadir Qassab, a prominent newspaper editor and Turkoman advocate, was killed in the town of Mossalah.[210]

Also in late May, the Turkish government authorized the army to draft a plan for a major incursion into Iraq to destroy Kurdish rebel bases there "once and for all," to

take place either before or after Turkey's July 22 parliamentary elections.[211] The Turkish government accused the United States of having a "double standard" in the war on terror for refusing to address the PKK bases in Iraq.[212] On June 4, Kurdish militants attacked a Turkish Army post, killing seven Turkish troops and wounding seven others. Other reports say eight soldiers were killed. That same day, militants detonated a remote-controlled roadside bomb near Diyarbakir, in southeastern Turkey, injuring six soldiers.[213]

Despite a warning given on June 4 by Defense Secretary Robert Gates against Turkish invasion, on June 5, thousands of Turkish soldiers crossed the Turkey-Iraq border in pursuit of members of the PKK. Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari denied allegations that Turkish soldiers crossed over, though they continued to amass on the border.[214] Despite this denial, two news agencies cited sources within the Turkish military that a cross-border attack had occurred.[215] On June 7, a roadside bomb killed three Turkish soldiers and wounded six in one of the several "temporary security zones" erected by the Turkish military along the Iraqi border.[216] Turkey shelled suspected Kurdish rebel positions in northern Iraq on June 7, according to Iraqi Kurdish officials.[217] Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan took a public stance against military incursions into northern Iraq on June 12. Mr. Erdoğan emphasized that Turkey should fight the PKK on its on soil.[218]

Analysts speculate that if the PKK is allowed to continue attacking Turkish targets, the Turkish military could use it as a pretext to stage a larger invasion aimed at preventing the Iraqi Kurds' claim to full independence.[219] The August NIE noted that "Turkey probably would use a range of measures to protect what it perceives as its interests in Iraq. The risk of cross-border operations against the People's Congress of Kurdistan (KG) terrorist group based in northern Iraq remains."

THE UNCERTAIN ROLE OF IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

U.S. and Iraqi strategy depended heavily on more successful efforts to hand over control to Iraqi forces, and on their willingness to act as national forces rather than serve sectarian or ethnic causes and factions. Iraqi security forces were seen as a key to both implementing the new surge in the Baghdad plan and creating lasting security for the population. Iraqi forces were supposed to plan and to "lead" the new security plan, but it was clear that U.S. forces would be conducting and planning the majority of operations, in part, because the Iraqi battalions arriving in the capital were not at full strength. In addition, Iraqi police forces continued to be accused of sectarianism; at least two specialized units in Basra Province were purged by British forces.

President Bush said on January 10, "We will help the Iraqis build a larger and better-equipped army, and we will accelerate the training of Iraqi forces, which remains the essential US security mission in Iraq." He also restated the increased advisory mission of U.S. embeds with the Iraqi security forces. The new strategy for Baghdad was to be led by roughly 18 Iraqi Army and National Police Brigades, the president said. The readiness of the Iraqi brigades, however, was unclear and U.S. troops would most likely lead the majority of the offensives.[220]

On January 17, 2007, Prime Minister al-Maliki stated that Iraq's reliance on U.S. forces could be reduced in three to six months if America accelerated the process of equipping Iraqi security forces. He also said that many American and Iraqi lives would have been saved if the United States had properly equipped ISF in previous years. An aide to the prime minister said that the Iraqi leader wanted heavier weapons because the weaponry of militias and insurgents was superior to that of the ISF.

A January 2007 U.S Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on "Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq" noted that the numbers reported as having been trained and equipped by U.S. government agencies still grossly overstated the number of Iraqi forces on duty. The report also reaffirmed that DoD and MNF-I could not account for some 90,000 weapons issued to Iraqi security forces.[221]

The March 2007 Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report also stated,

> The actual number of present-for-duty soldiers is about one-half to two-thirds of the total due to scheduled leave, absence without leave, and attrition. The police have also experienced significant attrition of personnel who have been through Coalition training, but provincial and local governments have hired additional police outside the train-and-equip program.

These locally hired police, however, were much more likely to have sectarian loyalties. The DoD estimated that 192,300 Ministry of Interior forces and 136,400 Ministry of Defense forces were trained and equipped by February 2007.

A subsequent GAO report released in March 2007 went further in explaining the factors that limited the abilities of the ISF. The GAO assessed the problem as follows:

> Iraqi security forces are not a single, unified force; instead, they are comprised of a wide range of units with different missions that have changed over time. Of the security forces' major components, only the Iraqi army currently has the primary mission of conducting counterinsurgency operations. . .
>
> The Iraqi national police—a paramilitary force of about 24,000 personnel under the Ministry of Interior—had conducted counterinsurgency operations in the past, but the Iraqi government decided in late 2006 to transform it into a civil security force due to frequent allegations of abuse and other illegal activities. . .
>
> The number of Iraqi security forces who are present for duty is significantly lower than the number of trained and equipped Iraqi personnel reported by DOD and State. For example, data on the number of trained and equipped Ministry of Interior personnel include police who are absent without leave, while Ministry of Defense data exclude military personnel who are absent without leave. . .
>
> Sectarian and militia influences on the Iraqi security forces have frustrated US efforts to develop effective Iraqi military and police forces and have contributed to the high levels of violence in Iraq. . .
>
> Capable and effective Iraqi security forces are a critical element in the US strategy to stabilize Iraq, drawdown US forces, and lay the foundation for political reconciliation

> and economic development. For the past 3 years, MNF-I has tried to reduce violence in Iraq so that Iraqi forces can assume greater responsibility for their country's security. The additional $5.8 billion that DOD now seeks for the Iraqi security forces attests to the importance of this mission. But, after 3 years, more than $15 billion in prior US assistance and a substantial increase in the number of Iraqi security forces, violence in Iraq's society has not lessened. This outcome is partly explained by the differing capabilities among Iraqi forces, high absenteeism, divided loyalties, and the continued reliance on US logistical support.[222]

Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., outgoing commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, said that training Iraqi forces was "occurring slower than we originally predicted." The U.S. military still planned to hand over complete control to Iraqi security forces by the end of 2007, but the January 2007 National Intelligence Estimate stated that if the United States were to withdraw in 12 to 18 months, "this would almost certainly lead to a significant increase in the scale and scope of the sectarian conflict in Iraq."[223] It was clear that the training effort of Iraqi troops would require U.S. troops in at least a supporting role for several years.

The commander of U.S. forces in northern Iraq, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Nixon, said in a March 9, 2007, press conference that military transition teams had added 400 soldiers since December 2006, an increase of 50 percent. An additional 33 police transition teams were also added. He stated that Iraqi security forces were 85-percent manned in northern Iraq, although they lacked equipment. MNF-North included the provinces of Ninewa, Tamim, Salah ad din, and Diyala, the latter of which was by far the most violent.

There also were still serious problems in specialized units such as the border security forces and the strategic infrastructure battalions. General Nixon said these forces "had a long way to go . . . They still need to make improvements in their overall manning, their equipping and their general professionalism, and we continue to work [on] that each day." He added that part of the problem stemmed from a failure to adequately vet recruits; a portion of the forces were found to have sympathies to the insurgency or were part of the black market theft of oil.[224]

Iraqi forces did not present critical problems in terms of open disloyalty, but they did sometimes take sectarian and ethnic sides, support or tolerate various forms of cleansing, and commit other abuses. The Iraqi Interior Ministry did take some steps to reduce sectarianism in the police forces, but these clearly still fell short of the need. The MOI fired or reassigned over 10,000 employees found guilty of human rights abuses. A MOI spokesman said that abuses included torturing prisoners, accepting bribes, or having known ties to militias. The MOI did not release the names or sects of those terminated, but said they included a number of high-ranking police. Since its establishment, the MOI was repeatedly accused of supporting sectarianism and allowing abuses within the largely Shi'ite police force.[225]

Similarly, British troops in Basra stormed the offices of an Iraqi government intelligence agency on March 5, 2007. The raid was not coordinated with either Iraqi troops or the Iraqi government, and Prime Minister al-Maliki said he would launch

a formal investigation. British officials, however, said they found 30 prisoners, some showing signs of torture. The Iraqi government did not comment on the torture allegations.[226]

An assessment by the Defense Intelligence Agency stated that Iraqi security forces were still heavily infiltrated by sectarian militias and were unready to take over security operations. Lt. Gen. Michael Maples told the following to the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 27:

> Iraqi Security Forces, particularly the Ministry of Interior forces, are infiltrated and influenced by members of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq's Badr organization and Moqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi. The Jaysh al-Mahdi often operates under the protection or approval of Iraqi Police. Many Sunnis view the ISF as a Shi'a led tool of oppression. Some Jaysh al-Mahdi cells may operate outside Sadr's direct guidance and conduct independent operations . . .
>
> The building, training, and deploying of Iraqi Security Forces and police is progressing, although politicization of the security ministries remains a challenge. The ISF are meeting the initial manned, trained, and equipped milestones, have improved unit capabilities, and are increasingly taking the lead in security operations. They remain generally dependent on Coalition support. We judge the Iraqi Security Forces are presently unable to stand-alone against Sunni insurgents, al-Qa'ida in Iraq and Shi'a militias.[227]

In July 2007, the White House Initial Benchmark Assessment Report to Congress stated that sectarianism was still an important problem in the Iraqi security forces. The report noted that the Iraqi Army was a more nationally oriented institution than the Iraqi National Police or local police forces. However, there continued to be sectarian bias in the appointment of senior military commanders and police.[228]

The report cited "a mix of positive and negative examples of civil-military relations with the current surge in operations, due largely to increased overwatch and partnering relations." Some Sunni residents of Baghdad, for example, believed that the National Police units were Shi'ite dominated, and biased against them. Inadequate efforts to detain senior Ministry of Interior officials believed to be responsible for human rights abuses added to this suspicion.[229]

The September 2007 White House Benchmark Assessment Report provided a somewhat more positive view, but one that still had many important reservations:

> The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continued to make progress, but development of their capabilities in some areas has been slower than hoped. Progress by the Iraqi Army has exceeded that of both the national and local police. ISF performance has generally met or exceeded expectations when units are partnered with Coalition forces in combined operations or in tactical overwatch—a potential model for the future. There are still challenges in developing Iraqi institutions to sustain existing forces, delays in obtaining required equipment, persistent ethno-sectarian influences and political interference, a limited pool of trained officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and attrition from combat.

. . . The Prime Minister's initiative to expand the ISF will eventually provide additional necessary forces, but the expansion will further strain the institutions that develop, train, and equip Iraqi forces. Despite these challenges, the ISF are increasingly engaged in providing security for the Iraqi population. They are in the fight. Over the last 18 months Iraqi forces suffered combat deaths three times the number of combat deaths of Coalition forces. We have been further encouraged by the recent downturn in anti-Coalition attacks in Baghdad and southern Iraq since the early September announcement of a stand-down in Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) operations. Time will tell whether this has a lasting effect.

The Prime Minister has provided Iraqi commanders the necessary authority to conduct security operations and continues to reaffirm his commitment to support these authorities. ISF continue to prosecute targets across Iraq, including in operations throughout Baghdad and in provinces that have already been turned over to Provincial Iraqi Control. The Prime Minister and senior commanders increasingly recognize the threat to long-term security posed by Shi'a militia extremists and continue to support targeting such elements. In late August, the Prime Minister removed the Shi'a commander of the Karbala Operations Command, ordered the arrest of three prominent Shi'a militia extremists who were in Karbala for the 12th Imam Commemoration, ordered an Iraqi Special Forces raid on key JAM cells in Karbala, and the strong response from the Iraqi government—as well as the public outrage at the violence—appears to have led to Moqtada al-Sadr's call for his extremist militia to halt all attacks against Coalition forces.

. . . The Iraqi Army as an institution continues to appear more nationally oriented and less susceptible to political interference than the Iraqi National Police or local forces, although some reform of the National Police has occurred. The degree of JAM influence within police forces is largely dependent upon the region or city. Within Baghdad, Iraqi Police in Sadr City and parts of Kadhamiyah are complicit with JAM activity. JAM influence is also strong in the cities of Al Amarrah, Hussaniyah, and Diwaniyah due to heavy infiltration of JAM members. Police activities in those areas that have been cleared and retained by Coalition and Iraqi forces appear to be the most even-handed.

. . . Coalition military leaders who work closely with their Iraqi counterparts to plan and conduct security operations have seen uneven progress on efforts to reduce political interference in military decisions. Where Iraqi security forces are fighting alongside Coalition Forces or manning joint security stations, ISF tactical commanders generally act on mission orders from their established chains of command.

There are no reported instances of political interference in operations directed against Sunni insurgents. However, there is evidence of political officials attempting to limit the effectiveness of independent Iraqi operations against Shi'a extremists. Political interference typically emanates from individuals in the Government of Iraq below the level of the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister has taken actions to limit such interference. For example, the Prime Minister was recently provided evidence of arrest lists for Sunni targets generated by an office below him that bypassed operational commanders. The Prime Minister responded by reorganizing and reducing the size of the office. As far as we can determine, any previous restrictions on targeting certain sects are no longer present.

. . . There also is still evidence of political interference with ISF operations from both the Ministry of Interior and the Office of the Commander in Chief (OCINC).

> Questionable judicial warrants by the OCINC have been used to try to replace Sunni officers who demonstrated effectiveness against Jaysh al-Mahdi operations in Baghdad and in southern provinces. In Muthanna province, there is evidence that Ministry of Interior officials have used de-Ba'athification laws to replace effective Sunni police officers with Shi'a officers. JAM-associated Ministry of Interior officials continue to exert such a significant influence over the Basra Police that the new Basra Provincial Director of Police raised this issue at a meeting with the Ministerial Council on National Security.
>
> There is strong evidence of efforts to remove sectarian commanders in the National Police. Since the start of this year, all Division Commanders, all Brigade Commanders, and 17 of 27 battalion commanders in the National Police were relieved of duty due to allegations of sectarian activity. In addition, a former Police Division Commander reassigned due to serious allegations has since been removed from his follow-on assignment as well. This is a signal that the Government of Iraq is committed to taking action with regard to sectarian bias.
>
> While the recent interventions by the Prime Minister and other government officials to curb sectarian bias are encouraging, the fear of being replaced for political or sectarian reasons remains and continues to influence commanders' decisions on which operations to undertake. Given the importance of this issue, we will need to continue monitoring the activities of government officials for signs of interference with ISF commanders' abilities to make tactical and operational decisions.[230]

If anything, the report was too tolerant. It did not reflect the fact that the sectarian problems in some Iraqi forces with Shi'ite officers and men still actively supported or tolerated the JAM in sectarian cleansing in Baghdad. The retrained National Police units often still presented problems, and U.S. officers in the Baghdad area found even some Iraqi Army units so suspect that they developed intelligence assessments of suspect officers down to the rank of lieutenant simply to better monitor the higher-risk units.

RULE OF LAW, INSURGENCY, AND CIVIL CONFLICT

The insurgency and Iraq's civil conflicts also interacted with Iraq's lack of a meaningful rule of law and a capable government. The rule of law suffered from overcrowded prisons, insufficient numbers of judges and attorneys who experienced constant threats on their lives, rapidly conducted and inadequate trials, and a lack of communication among U.S. forces, Iraqi forces, and the Iraqi government. The high level of corruption in the government and the ministries provided a poor example to other institutions.

In 2006, only 22 percent of the capital budget (an estimated $1.35 billion of $6.2 billion budgeted) was spent. The Initial Benchmark Assessment Report in July 2007 stated that all parties and all levels of the Iraqi government shared an emphasis on budget execution in 2007. While it was too soon to determine how much improvement would be able to take place by the end of the year, issues from 2006 were still being addressed. For example, the Ministry of Oil showed little progress at executing its portion of the capital budget, which amounted to nearly 25 percent.[231]

The misappropriation of government funds and corruption got constant public attention inside Iraq and in the world. In early January 2007 the *Los Angeles Times* acquired the proposed 2007 Iraqi budget. The *Times* reported that nearly $2 billion was allocated to agencies "beyond the oversight of the central government." Iraqi officials also said that most ministries got millions in funds called "social benefits" that had few spending safeguards. Further, the draft called for cuts to the Commission on Public Integrity—which investigated corruption—by 13 percent.

The head of the Iraqi Commission on Public Integrity, Radi al-Radhi, said on April 4, 2007, that $8 billion in government money had been wasted or stolen in the past three years. The largest chunk of the money, $2 billion, disappeared from funds to rebuild the electricity sector. He also said that his commission had investigated 2,600 corruption cases since 2004, for which he received numerous death threats. Arrest warrants were issued for some 90 former officials, most of whom fled the country.

Al-Radhi blamed some of the corruption on clause 136B in the Iraqi constitution, which gave cabinet ministers the power to block the commission's investigations. These ministers had blocked investigations into an estimated $55 million in public funds.[232]

Corruption within the Iraqi government continued to hinder effective governance. In a January 2007 report to Congress, the GAO said the following of the problem of corruption in Iraq:

> Corruption in Iraq is reportedly widespread and poses a major challenge to building an effective Iraqi government and could jeopardize future flows of needed international assistance. . .According to US government and World Bank reports, the reasons for corruption in the Iraqi ministers are several, including the following:
>
> - The absence of an effective Iraqi banking system leaves the government dependence on cash transactions.
> - The majority of key Iraqi ministries have inadequately transparent, obsolete, or ambiguous procurement systems.
> - Key accountability institutions, such as the inspectors general who were installed in each Iraqi ministry in 2004 lack the resources and independence to operate effectively and consistently.
> - The government has no strategy to implement training for its three anti-corruption institutions—the Commission on Public Integrity, the Board of Supreme Audit, and the inspectors general in each ministry.Furthermore, Embassy Baghdad's Anticorruption Working Group attributed poor performance by the anti-corruption institutions to the government's lack of visible and authoritative commitment and engagement.[233]

The Defense Department's "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" Quarterly Report for March 2007 warned that crime and corruption interacted with sectarian and ethnic violence in a climate where the rule of law generally did not function:

Criminal activities remain elevated and are often difficult to distinguish from sectarian and other violence. White collar crime is an entrenched practice stemming from decades of nepotism and organized criminal activities by government institutions of the former regime; it will remain a serious obstacle for the GOI for years to come. The Board of Supreme Audit, the Commission on Public Integrity, and ministry inspectors general continue to work with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to promote transparency and to curb this entrenched practice.

Budget execution and corruption problems continue to hamper the GOI's ability to perform and turn good intentions into results. . . To be fully effective, however, Iraq must also reform Saddam-era laws that allow cabinet ministers to shield government officials from prosecution, and all Iraqi leaders must commit to ensuring the neutral and independent application of the law. The United States is also working with the World Bank and other international institutions to support the three primary anti-corruption institutions in Iraq: the Commission on Public Integrity, the Supreme Board of Audit, and the inspectors general assigned to the government ministries. The US Embassy in Baghdad recently restructured its rule of law and law enforcement offices to improve their effectiveness in achieving civilian rule of law objectives in Iraq. . .

Militia infiltration of local police remains a problem and Prime Minister Maliki has demonstrated a commitment to retraining and reforming police units that are shown to be serving sectarian or parochial interests. Though improving, the lack of a fully functional justice system has led to unreliable detention practices, and police have often disregarded release orders signed by Iraqi judges. Security forces also remain prone to intimidation by or collusion with militias and criminal gangs, thereby decreasing the confidence among ordinary Iraqis in their legitimate security force. . .

As of January 2007, Iraq had approximately 870 investigative and trial judges (up 70 from the last report) and 100 criminal courts. The GOI recognizes the need to expand judicial capacity. To meet the growing demands of the judiciary, the number of judicial investigators is scheduled to reach 700 in 2007 and 1,000 in 2008. The MOJ now operates a Judicial Training Institute. The first class of 178 judges and prosecutors is scheduled to graduate in summer 2007. A second class of 60 trainees is scheduled to graduate in fall 2008. These are positive steps, but to meet the growing demand across the judicial sector, the MOJ needs to increase the system's capacity. . .

Judges frequently face threats and attacks, and thus absenteeism and resignations undermine the workforce. Those who remain often fear handing down guilty verdicts against defendants with ties to insurgent groups or militias. In the provincial courts, judges often decline to investigate or try cases related to the insurgency and terrorism. . .

Concerns remain that the Iraqi Corrections Service is increasingly infiltrated by criminal organizations and militias. Detention facilities in Iraq do not meet incarceration needs. Pre-trial detention facilities in Iraq, administered by the MOI, the Ministry of Defense (MOD), and the MOJ, are reported to be overcrowded, substandard facilities with poor detainee accountability practices. Post trial prisons, administered by the MOJ, generally meet international standards, but are at maximum capacity. To address this problem, Prime Minister Maliki and the Minister of Justice are demanding greater oversight of prison facilities, and US advisors are encouraging the MOJ to increase the salaries of corrections officers to bring them more in line with those of police officers and thus to reduce the temptations of bribery. The Embassy and Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) are also working with the GOI to increase detention capacity in

the near term through additional compounds with adequate oversight in Baghdad and in the long term through hardened facilities to be administered by the MOJ.[234]

This made the 2007 Iraqi national budget as much a target of national corruption as a potential source of progress. The entire 2007 budget was 21 percent larger than that of the previous year, an increase that raised questions even by the prime minister's closest allies. In addition, the total figure did not include the extra $8 billion that ministries failed to spend in 2006 on reconstruction projects and funds from the international community. The budget, like other key issues, reflected sectarianism and little evidence of compromise. Sunnis were unlikely to vote for the proposal in its current draft form.

One contentious issue in the Iraqi budget—and a program that Sunni lawmakers opposed—was the allocation of $230 million to victims of the Hussein government. Yet the budget planned to spend only $6 million on victims of internal displacement, the number of which the UN put at 1.8 million.

The 2007 budget included an increase of 60 percent to funds for improving the country's infrastructure and 50 percent for Health and Education. The largest chunk of the total budget, however, was allocated to Iraqi security forces. The Sunni-controlled Defense Ministry would receive roughly the same amount as in 2006—$4 billion—despite planned personnel increases and the need for equipment. Funds to the Shi'ite-controlled Interior Ministry, however, would increase 25 percent to $2 billion.[235]

U.S. officials also said that only the Central Criminal Court of Iraq in Baghdad effectively handled insurgent cases. Local tribunals, such as one in Mosul, had a backlog of cases in the thousands. To deal with the large numbers, trials lasted only ten minutes in some cases. If there was not sufficient evidence or the detainee did not admit to the crime, he or she was released, but some had been held for up to two years in poor conditions.[236]

INSURGENTS AND DETAINEES

The expanding operation also led to a steep increase in the number of detainees, but this had mixed results. U.S. and Iraqi troops detained hundreds of suspected insurgents in the first few months of the new Baghdad security plan. According to the Ministry of Human Rights, the number of Iraqis detained nationwide from the end of January until the end of March increased by approximately 7,000 to 37,641. U.S. forces arrested 2,000 prisoners a month in March and April, almost twice the average from the second half of 2006.[237] According to the Department of Defense Quarterly Report, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq, June 2007," the number of detainees in March and April was almost 20 percent higher than the monthly average for December through February.[238]

Al-Sadr continued to stand down the Mahdi Army, and the majority of new detainees were Sunni. A White House memo stated that 16,000 new suspected

insurgents were being held, while General Petraeus said in an interview that Coalition forces had detained 700 members of the Mahdi Army.[239]

There were, however, cases involving leading Shi'ites as well. One high-profile Shi'ite detainee was the son of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of the SIIC. Amar al-Hakim was arrested by U.S. troops after crossing the Iran/Iraq border because of an alleged expired passport—which Amar denied. Amar accused the U.S. forces of treating him roughly. U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad later apologized for the detention.[240] The SIIC was then cooperating with the U.S. occupation and had at least partially stood down the Badr Organization.

This growing detainee population put a strain on detention facilities. At the start of the new strategy in February 2007, the United States held some 17,000 detainees in two large facilities—13,800 at Camp Bucca in southern Iraq and 3,300 at Camp Cropper outside Baghdad. The number held at Cropper, however, was expected to rise to 5,000 in the next several months.[241] The average detention time for U.S.–held detainees was one year, but about 8,000 had been held longer.[242]

The Iraqi detention centers across the country held an additional 34,000 people in questionable conditions.[243] The Department of State Human Rights Report released in March 2007 reported on such conditions in 2006, before the surge began, and stated that it found "many, well-documented instances of torture and other abuses by government agents and by illegal armed groups" in Iraqi prisons.

As the surge took hold, there was growing evidence that detainees held by Iraqi forces were being mistreated and kept in poor conditions. In one instance, Iraqi Army officers handed over three detainees to U.S. troops. The detainees confessed to aiding insurgents and gave the military key intelligence. Before handing the men over to the Americans, however, the Iraqi Army officials had beaten one of them with what appeared to be an electrical cable. The Iraqi soldiers said that they knew how to get a confession out of suspects and did not beat them too much.[244]

The soldiers said that they knew that the Iraqi Army forbade abusing detainees, but they said that the insurgents' force needed to be answered with force. Yet, the same soldiers also said that many suspected insurgents captured by U.S. and Iraqi forces did not want to be part of the insurgency and were quick to talk. One Iraqi soldier said of the detainees, "They are young people. They are having to stay home without employment. They want food. They want money. They want to be able to marry. But there are no jobs. If you offered them jobs, most of them would not be working for Al Qa'ida."[245]

As Iraqi detention facilities became more overcrowded, untried detainees were transferred to live with convicts. More than 15 percent of the Justice Ministry's prison population, 1,843 detainees, in May 2007 were currently untried military detainees, transferred from military detention centers.[246]

The Kadhimiyah detention center in a predominantly Shi'ite neighborhood of northern Baghdad housed more than 1,000 detainees in May, though it was designed to accommodate only 400. Kadhimiyah was known to detain juveniles. While Interior Ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Abdul-Karim Khalaf denied that detainees were abused at Kadhimiyah, former inmates claimed they were subject to routine

ill treatment, abuse, and torture. Iraq's minister of human rights said that Iraqi military prison guards are not trained in proper care for detainees.[247]

The Iraqi constitution required that documents must be submitted outlining the detainee's preliminary investigation within 24 hours of his or her arrest, with a possible 24-hour extension. However, the sudden increase of prisoners overburdened the system, and many suspects were forced to wait weeks or months before they were brought to trial. It was also unclear how the already overwhelmed Iraqi court system was addressing the numbers, although the United States did approve the addition of 2,200 military police to help handle the detainees being held.[248]

There was also only limited international inspection. The International Red Cross reported that it had visited more than 17,000 detainees held by U.S., Kurdish, and British forces, but was not allowed to visit the 18,000–20,000 people being held at Iraqi government facilities. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Chief Jakob Kellenberger said, "It's the modalities of our visits which we have to negotiate with the Iraqi authorities," citing security considerations as a "huge challenge" to the ICRC staff visitations of detainees.[249]

All of these problems raised important issues for the future. U.S. and Iraqi authorities did build two detention centers in eastern Baghdad, one at an existing prison complex in Rusafa, capable of accommodating 5,250 people, and the other at Baladiyat, with a capacity of 850 prisoners.[250] The United States also expanded its two primary detention centers in Iraq, Camp Bucca in the south and Camp Cropper outside Baghdad.

Nevertheless, U.S. counts indicated that the number of detainees continued to rise from around 18,000 in June to 24,000 at the end of August, The United States also projected totals of 35,000 by the end of 2007 and 50,000 by the end of 2008. It was far from clear whether Iraq and the United States were prepared to deal with these numbers, screen and judge them fairly, and avoid a strong anti-Sunni/pro-Shi'ite bias in ISF efforts to deal with them.

Moreover, Iraqi-run centers still served as *de facto* training and indoctrination centers where insurgent prisoners manipulated the overall detainee population, as well as alienated Sunnis and others who saw how family and tribal members were treated. In some centers, detainment may have created more enemies than it detained.

THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE STATES

Outside states continued to express their concerns about the deteriorating security situation in Iraq. Jordan and Syria were concerned about the flow of refugees across their borders, and both states tightened border security in 2007. The United States increasingly accused Iran of instigating sectarian violence by funding and supplying Shi'ite militias.

Several outside states convened at a conference on Iraq in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on May 4, 2007. The conference, the International Compact with Iraq and the Expanded Ministerial Conference on the Neighbors of Iraq, was the second in a series of international discussions aimed at creating a more stable Iraq. Iraq's

neighbors—Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Iran, and Kuwait—the United States, and several other countries attended.[251] The participating countries agreed to make commitments to undertake more than $30 billion in Iraqi debt relief.

The fact remained, however, that outside states played only a limited positive role, and one where good intentions (or statements thereof) were far more common than good actions.

Impacts: Good and Bad

The National Intelligence Estimate for Iraq, released in early February 2007, summarized the role of outside states as follows:[252]

- Iraq's neighbors influence, and are influenced by, events within Iraq, but the involvement of these outside actors is not likely to be a major driver of violence or the prospects for stability because of the self-sustaining character of Iraq's internal sectarian dynamics. Nonetheless, Iranian lethal support for select groups of Iraqi Shi'a militants clearly intensifies the conflict in Iraq. Syria continues to provide safe haven for expatriate Iraqi Ba'athists and to take less than adequate measures to stop the flow of foreign jihadists into Iraq.
- For key Sunni regimes, intense communal warfare, Shi'a gains in Iraq, and Iran's assertive role have heightened fears of regional instability and unrest and contributed to a growing polarization between Iran and Syria on the one hand and other Middle East governments on the other. But traditional regional rivalries, deepening ethnic and sectarian violence in Iraq over the past year, persistent anti-Americanism in the region, anti-Shi'a prejudice among Arab states, and fears of being perceived by their publics as abandoning their Sunni co-religionists in Iraq have constrained Arab states' willingness to engage politically and economically with the Shi'ite Dominated government in Baghdad and led them to consider unilateral support to Sunni groups.
- Turkey does not want Iraq to disintegrate and is determined to eliminate the safe haven in northern Iraq of the Kurdistan People's Congress (KGK, formerly PKK)—a Turkish Kurdish terrorist group.

As for the Iraqi government, it appealed to the international community for support and international cooperation. On March 10, 2007, 13 countries and three international groups met in Baghdad to discuss Iraq's security crisis. Key attending countries included Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, Turkey, the United States, and Britain. Prime Minister al-Maliki stated, "This is an international epidemic. It needs to be met by an international stand and—more importantly—a stand by which our brothers and neighbors support Iraq in this battle." He again requested that outside states respect Iraq's borders and sovereignty and that they do nothing to instigate violence. Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari announced that the attending parties had agreed to create three committees for security cooperation, Iraqi refugees, and energy supplies.[253] Like the other conferences that followed, however, it produced words and little meaningful result. The same was true of a U.S.–Iranian-Iraqi dialogue session that did little

more than result in U.S. accusations and Iranian denials and calls for the United States to leave.

Tensions with Syria

Syria continued to be accused of allowing safe haven to Sunni insurgents and allowing foreign fighters to cross the border throughout the war. The Pentagon's "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" March 2007 report to Congress noted the normalization of relations between Syria and Iraq, but remained critical about Syria's role in propagating violence:

> Although Iraq resumed diplomatic relations with Syria in November 2006, Damascus appears unwilling to cooperate fully with the GOI on bilateral security initiatives. Syria continues to provide safe haven, border transit, and limited logistical support to some Iraqi insurgents, especially former Saddam-era Iraqi Ba'ath Party elements. Syria also permits former regime elements to engage in organizational activities, such that Syria has emerged as an important organizational and coordination hub for elements of the former Iraqi regime. Although Syrian security and intelligence services continue to detain and deport Iraq-bound fighters, Syria remains the primary foreign fighter gateway into Iraq. Despite its heightened scrutiny of extremists and suspected insurgents, Damascus appears to want to appease Islamist extremist groups. Damascus also recognizes that Islamist extremists and elements of the former Iraqi regime share Syria's desire to undermine Coalition efforts in Iraq.[254]

President Bush mentioned the role of outside nations in Iraq in his January 10 speech:

> We will work with others to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons and dominating the region...
>
> We will use America's full diplomatic resources to rally support for Iraq from nations throughout the Middle East. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf States need to understand that an American defeat in Iraq would create a new sanctuary for extremists and a strategic threat to their survival. These nations have a state in a successful Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors, and they must step up their support for Iraq's unity government. We endorse the Iraqi government's call to finalize an International Compact that will bring new economic assistance in exchange for greater economic reform.[255]

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice elaborated on the president's comments in her testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 11:

> While many of us are working to strengthen peace in the region, two governments have unfortunately chosen to align themselves with the forces of violent extremism—both in Iraq and across the Middle East. One is Syria. Despite many appeals, including from Syria's fellow Arab states, the leaders in Damascus continue to destabilize Iraq and their neighbors and support terrorism. The problem here is not a lack of talk with Syria but a lack of action by Syria.

> Iran is the other. If the government in Tehran wants to help stabilize the region, as it now claims, it should end its support for violent extremists who destroy the aspirations of innocent Lebanese, Palestinians, and Iraqis. And it should end its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. I repeat my offer today: If Iran suspends its enrichment of uranium —which is, after all, an international demand, not just an American one—then the United States is prepared to reverse 27 years of policy, and I will meet with my Iranian counterpart—anytime, anywhere—to discuss every facet of our countries' relationship. Until then, we will continue to work with the Iraqis and use all of our power to limit and counter the activities of Iranian agents who are attacking our people and innocent civilians in Iraq.

On February 4, 2007, the Iraqi government publicly accused Syria of harboring terrorists that were responsible for the large-scale suicide bombing in Baghdad the previous day. Government spokesman Ali Dabbagh said, "I confirm that 50 percent of murders and bombings are by Arab extremists coming from Syria." The government did not provide evidence for their accusation. During the parliamentary session, Shi'ite politicians called for expelling Syrians and closing the borders, to which Sunni speaker Mahmoud Mashadani replied, "Be careful about what you say, because we have a half million Iraqis there."[256]

In an interview with *U.S. News and World Report* in late April, General Petraeus reiterated Syria's "unhelpful" role in fighting the insurgency; "It is a fact that foreign fighters come in through Syria . . . and that various insurgent groups have their political headquarters, if you will, inside Syria."[257] The country remains an important center for the former Iraqi regime. The Syrian government allows major insurgent organizations and financial centers to operate out of Damascus.[258]

In an interview on June 20, General Petraeus estimated about 80 al-Qa'ida fighters enter Iraq from Syria every month.[259] However, recent improvements on border control on the part of the Syrian government were noted in the June 2007 Department of Defense Quarterly Report.[260] The June NIE on Iraq summarized the situation as follows, and the situation it described was still the same in early September:

> Syria has cracked down on some Sunni extremist groups attempting to infiltrate fighters into Iraq through Syria because of threats they pose to Syrian stability, but the IC now assesses that Damascus is providing support to non-AQI groups inside Iraq in a bid to increase Syrian influence.

Syria was, however, coming under growing pressure. Senior Syrian officials expressed their concerns over the fact Syria now had some 1.4 million Iraqi refugees, most Sunni. They saw a growing strain on the Syrian economy and a growing risk that Sunni Islamist extremism, terrorism, and support for the Muslim Brotherhood could damage Syria's security.

There was also a growing understanding that backing Sunni insurgents of any kind was unlikely to bring Syria any kind of lasting victory and that Syria did not face a serious threat of any form of U.S. military action. Some senior Syrian officials saw Iran as a growing potential rival, and others thought that it would help ensure an

unstable Iraqi state on Syria's borders. The lack of political dialog on the part of the United States and Syria, however, made it difficult to determine what levels of cooperation might be achieved.

Iran: Growing Tensions with the United States and the United Kingdom, Growing Ties to the Iraqi Government

The United States continued to accuse Iran of propagating violence in Iraq by supplying materials necessary to make explosively formed penetrators (EFPs). Iran denied all charges, and some experts agreed that the evidence was not sufficient to link Iran to the weapons. Iranian involvement in Iraq, however, was clearly on the rise at the political, economic, and military levels.

Iranian Arms Transfers to Iraqi Insurgents

From August 2006 to August 2007, senior Coalition leaders and U.S. politicians made allegations that Iran was increasingly supplying anti-Coalition militias and sectarian groups with weapons and aid. An article in *Jane's Intelligence Digest* outlined four considerations that led U.S. military leaders to believe Iran is responsible for the dissemination of EFPs in Iraq.

- First, EFP manufacturing facilities did not exist in Iraq; therefore, either a combination of raw materials and technical assistance must be brought into Iraq from Iran, or finished EFPs must be smuggled in.
- Second, EFP incidents first occurred almost exclusively in Shi'ite strongholds such as eastern Baghdad, calling attention to Shi'ite ties between Iran and militias in Iraq, although U.S. intelligence later charged that Iran had begun to assist Sunni groups as well.
- Third, military leaders identified IEDs and EFPs that bear Iranian manufacturing markings or that were seized from the Iraq-Iran border.
- U.S. intelligence raised the additional point that EFP attacks were similar in tactics and technology to the attacks used in other areas that received Iranian assistance.[261]

U.S. accusations against Iranian weapon smuggling increased after President Bush announced the new Baghdad security plan. MNF-I Commander Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno said in an interview in January with *USA Today,* "We have weapons that we know through serial numbers . . . that trace back to Iran." He said the weapons included the following:[262]

- The RPG-29, a rocket-propelled grenade that can fire armor-piercing rounds. It is larger and more sophisticated than the RPG-7 more commonly found in Iraq.
- Katyusha rockets, so large they are generally fired from trucks.
- Powerful roadside bombs, known as explosively formed projectiles, which can pierce armor. The technological know-how and "some of the elements to make them are coming out of Iran," Odierno said.

Odierno added that arrests made in December and January had provided clues and that some of the Iranians were still held at the end of January.

The March 2007 DoD "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report said as follows of Iranian involvement:

> Iranian lethal support for select groups of Shi'a militants intensifies the conflict in Iraq. Consistent with the National Intelligence Estimate, Iranian support to Shi'a militias, such as JAM and the Badr Organization, includes providing lethal weapons, training, financing, and technical support. This includes supplying some Shi'a extremist groups with explosively formed projectiles (EFPs), the most effective of the roadside bombs. Shi'a extremist groups have been implicated in direct attacks against Coalition forces, including with EFP technology. EFPs require advanced manufacturing processes and training for employment that clearly place them outside the category of "improvised explosive devices."[263]

To put these statements in perspective, U.S. commanders and officials had regularly accused Iran of supplying weapons and funds, provided evidence of Iranian illicit activity in Iraq long before the surge, and continued to do so through early September 2007:

- August 23, 2006: Brig. Gen. Michael D. Barbero, Deputy Chief of Operations of the Joint Staff, said the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's al-Qods Force was training, funding, and equipping Shi'ite militias.[264]
- September 28, 2006: Maj. Gen. Richard Zahner, Deputy Chief of Saff for Intelligence of the MNF-I, said that C-4 explosives found at Shi'ite militia sites had labels that proved they were from Iran. In addition Zahner said that only the Iranian military has access to military-grade explosives such as C-4.[265]
- In late 2006, Bush authorized U.S. forces to root out IRGC-Qods forces and suspected Department 9000 secret operatives in Iraq. The crackdown reduced the number of IED attacks attributable to suspected weapons of Iranian origin or design.[266] Two U.S military raids in December and January secured seven Qods Force operatives, including two top commanders. The five mid-level operatives were captured in Irbil in January and remained in U.S. custody, while the Iraqi government continued to pressure U.S officials to release the two senior commanders captured in Baghdad.[267]
- January 31, 2007: Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, Commander of Multi-National Force–Iraq, said that the United States had traced back to Iran the serial numbers of weapons seized in Iraq, including RPGs, roadside bombs, and Katyushas.[268]
- On February 12, 2007, U.S. military officials presented their evidence of Iranian involvement in Iraq. They displayed mortar shells, rocket-propelled grenades, and an explosively formed penetrator bomb that they said were manufactured in Iran and given to rogue members of the Mahdi Army in Iraq. The weaponry was smuggled into Iraq by the Iranian Qods Force—which had helped train Hezbollah in Lebanon. However, the officials said that there was no "widespread involvement" of the highest levels of the Iranian government.[269]

- In February 2007, U.S. forces continued to find weapons caches that they said supported Iranian involvement. A weapons cache in the largely Shi'ite town of Hillah included infrared sensors, electronic triggering devices, and information on explosives. All the materials were similar to those found in southern Lebanon and used by Hezbollah. Many experts, however, remained unconvinced that the components could not be produced in Iraq. The electronic devices were rudimentary and included garage door openers, and the copper disk used in EFPs could be created by any machine. John Pike, director of GlobalSecurity.org, stated that the most convincing pieces of evidence were those about the "trademark of the fuse and the wrappings of the explosives."[270]
- In March 2007, a British Army Board of Inquiry determined that a SA14 Strella missile that brought down a Royal Air Force Lynx helicopter in May 2006 came from Iran. The official report was not released, but the unclassified components left little doubt that the surface-to-air missile was smuggled across borders.[271]
- U.S. accusations against Iranian weapon smuggling increased as the security plan escalated. U.S. military spokesman Major General Caldwell said on April 11, 2007, that the military had intelligence that Iran was training Iraqi militias in both Iran and Iraq. Those militias that traveled to Iraq for training had received instruction on how to make EFPs. Caldwell stated, "There has been training on specialized weapons that are used here in Iraq. And then we do know they receive also training on general tactics of how to take and employ and work what we call a more complex kind of attack where we see multiple types of engagements being used from an explosive to small-arms fire to being done in multiple places." Caldwell did not specify who in Iran was doing the training, but said they were "surrogates" of the Iranian intelligence agency.[272]
- In his interview with *U.S. News & World Report,* General Petraeus said of Iranian involvement in Iraq, "It's a fact that Iran has been fueling some of the very, very lethal activities on the Shi'a side through the provision of money, advanced weapons, and training." Petraeus also said that U.S. and Iraqi forces had captured two rogue Mahdi Army militiamen, Laith and Qais Khazali, who led a group of 3,000 fighters who had received training in Iran. Petraeus said, "We learned an enormous amount about [Iranian activities] during the interrogation of the Khazali brothers and the materials that were captured with them."[273]
- On May 13 the White House confirmed that the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan C. Crocker, would meet in the next several weeks with Iranian officials regarding the stability of Iraq. Spokesman for the National Security Council, Gordon D. Johndroe, said, "The president authorized this channel because we must take every step possible to stabilize Iraq and reduce the risk to our troops, even as our military continue to act against hostile Iranian-backed activity in Iraq."[274]
- On May 18 U.S. troops captured six men suspected of smuggling materials to form EFPs. The military said in a statement that the group was known for "facilitating the transport of weapons and explosively formed penetrators, or EFP's, from Iran to Iraq, as well as bringing militants from Iraq to Iran for terrorist training."[275]
- On May 19, U.S. Special Operations forces killed Sheikh Azhar al-Dulaymi in the Sadr City district of Baghdad. Dulaymi was a Shi'ite insurgent leader responsible for the January 20 attack that killed five American troops. According to internal military documents al-Dulaymi was trained by Hezbollah and linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps. The Bush administration said that it could not yet prove that Iran's mullahs or

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad directed the Guard Corps to send special forces or powerful roadside bombs into Iraq, but al-Dulaymi's direct connection with Tehran and Hezbollah indicates a degree of Iranian involvement that was previously unknown. Robert Maginnis, a retired Army officer and military analyst said, "Clearly, Dulaymi was doing Iran's bidding."[276]

- President Bush approved an order in late May, authorizing the CIA to use covert methods to aggravate the Iranian regime.[277] The target of the covert action is Iran's nuclear weapons program and to stem Iranian support for insurgent groups in Iraq.[278]
- On May 26, in Sadr City, U.S. and Iraqi forces arrested a suspected leader of a terror cell with ties to Iran, who allegedly smuggled weapons from Iran to Iraq and took Iraqis to Iran for training.[279] Military raids on June 7 in Sadr City rounded up 16 people suspected of smuggling weapons from Iran and sending militants to Iran for training.[280] Al-Sadr said on June 7 that Tehran and the Mahdi Army had "friendship and good relations with Iran, but nothing else."[281]
- U.S. intelligence found that Iran shipped 107-mm mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, C-4 explosives, and small arms to Iraqi insurgent groups in March and that the country increased arms shipments to Iraq's Shi'ite insurgent groups at the end of May. According to intelligence reports, Iranian paramilitaries began to assist Sunni insurgent groups in order to step up confrontations with U.S. troops as well.[282]
- Iranian 240-mm rockets were used at the end of May by Shi'ite extremists against U.S. and British troops in Basra and Baghdad. Three of the rockets were used against U.S. facilities in the Green Zone. Tehran's efforts to supply the Shi'ite insurgency were organized under an Iranian government group, Department 9000, part of the elite Qods Force of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).[283] The Department is a liaison between insurgents in Iraq and the IRGC.[284]
- In an interview with the *London Times* on June 20, 2007, General Petraeus said that since the summer of 2004, Iran has played a "very, very important role in training in Iran, funding and arming" militias and insurgents in Iraq. He said, "This is lethal stuff, like EFPs, mortars, and rockets that are being used against the Basra Palace. There is also a degree of direction, not in a strategic way but in tactical operations. We captured a wealth of documentation which showed how they account for what they have done, we assume so they can get paid for it, and get additional funding."[285] General Petraeus also said that he believed that the kidnapping of British citizens from the Green Zone was carried out by a "secret cell of Jaish al-Mahdi, not all of which are under control of Moqtada al-Sadr." Petraeus said, "They are trained in Iran, equipped with Iranian (weapons), and advised by Iran."[286]
- July 2, 2007: In early July, Brig. Gen. Kevin J. Bergner said that Tehran was using Hezbollah in Iraq as a proxy to carry out attacks and train and arm Shi'ite militants. Bergner asserted that Hezbollah was receiving aid from Iran's elite Qods Force. Bergner said that Hezbollah did not seem to have a strong presence in Iraq, but that it was "being used specifically as a proxy by the Qods Force."[287] On March 20, Ali Mussa Dakdouk, a senior Lebanese Hezbollah operative, was captured in Iraq along with Qais al-Khazaali, the leader of an offshoot of the Mahdi Army, and Ali al-Khazaali, his brother. Bergner asserted that al-Khazaali's group, with the help of the Qods Forces, was responsible for carrying out the Karbala attack that took place in January, killing one American immediately and abducting and killing four others.[288]

- August 8, 2007: Lieutenant General Odierno said that EFPs accounted for 73 percent of attacks that killed or wounded U.S. troops in July.
- August 26, 2007: Lieutenant General Odierno said that Iran had increased its activity in supporting both Shi'ite and Sunni extremists in June and July. "It's clear to me that over the past 30 to 60 days they have increased their support . . . They do it from providing weapons, ammunition—specifically mortars and explosively formed projectiles." Odierno added, "They are providing monetary support to some groups and they are conducting training within Iran of Iraqi extremists to come back here and fight the United States."[289]

The unclassified elements of the National Intelligence Estimate, released on August 7, 2007, stated the following:

> Over the next year Tehran, concerned about a Sunni reemergence in Iraq and US efforts to limit Iranian influence, will continue to provide funding, weaponry and training to Iraqi Shi'a militants. Iran has been intensifying aspects of its lethal support for select groups of Iraqi Shi'a militants, particularly the JAM, since at least the beginning of 2006. Explosively formed penetrator (EFP) attacks have risen dramatically.[290]

Experts disagreed whether the Qods Force reported directly to Ayatollah Khomeini or whether it had evolved into a rogue paramilitary. It was active in Iraq in the 1980s helping Kurdish rebels fight Saddam Hussein and in the 1990s helping Shi'ites in the south opposed to the Sunni Ba'athist regime. It was estimated to have some 2,000 highly trained fighters.[291] Iraqi officials were hesitant to accept the evidence against Iran. Deputy Foreign Minister Labeed Abbawi said, "If [the United States] have anything really conclusive, then they should come out and say it openly, then we will pick it up from there and use diplomatic channels."[292]

Iranian Ties to Iraq

A study by the International Crisis Group in March 2005 assessed the motivations of Iranian influence in Iraq. The Crisis Group concluded that while Iran would stand to gain from a Shi'ite-dominated government in Iraq, it did not want the Iraqi government to become too strong or confident, so that Iran would retain its regional dominance. Therefore Iran had implemented a combined strategy of supporting national Iraqi elections, promoting and investing in a diverse array of Iraqi actors, and creating a degree of "manageable" chaos. The former strategy would ensure a Shi'ite-dominated Iraqi national government, while investing in multiple actors would safeguard Iranian interests in case one or another group gained significant power. By encouraging small levels of in-fighting and violence against Coalition troops, Iran ensures that the Iraqi government remains dependent, while denying the United States a victory that it fears would encourage U.S. leaders to wage a similar offensive against Tehran.

The Maliki government strengthened its relationships with its neighbor in spite of these developments. In late January 2007 Iran's Ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Kazemi

Qumi, said that the two countries were expanding their economic and military ties. He said that Iran would offer training for Iraqi security forces and would provide significant reconstruction aid. He did not go into detail on military assistance, but said his plan involved enhanced border security and the creation of a "joint security committee." He also said that Iran would open a national bank in Iraq, which an Iraqi banking official confirmed, and that several more banks would follow in the future. Qumi did acknowledge that two Iranians detained and later released by the United States in an operation in Baghdad were security officials, as the United States had said, but that they were in legal talks with the Iraqi government.[293]

Iran's increased political and economic role in Iraq was notable. At the end of January, Tehran had 56 diplomats in its embassy staff in Baghdad and consulates in Basra and Karbala. Iran provided 20 percent of Iraqi demand for cooking gas as well as 2 million liters of kerosene and plans to quadruple the number of electricity projects. Iran offered a $1 billion line of credit for reconstruction.[294]

Overall trade between Iran and Iraq was reported to have grown some 30 percent since 2003, but this was an uncertain estimate because the Iranian government did not provide accurate figures. Iran did say that its trade with the Kurdish region alone amounted to $1 billion in 2006. Southern and central Iraq, however, clearly benefited the most from increased Iranian involvement. The governor of Najaf (Najaf is the home of several Shi'ite shrines that attract tens of thousands of pilgrims each month) stated that Iran gave the city $20 million a year to "build tourist facilities for pilgrims." Neighboring Karbala also received about $3 million a year.

In addition, several Iraqi cities near the border increasingly relied heavily on Iran for electricity. Basra planned to import 250 megawatts of power from Iran by the summer of 2007. Diyala Province in central Iraq already imported 120 megawatts. Basic goods from Iran, such as air conditioners and cars, also flooded Iraqi markets. Storeowners said that it was much cheaper to import the goods from Iran than from other places, such as China. Iraqis also increasingly traveled to Iran for medical treatment, due to the massive brain drain and health-care crisis in Iraq.[295]

Prime Minister al-Maliki, who had long had ties to Iran, visited Iran in August 2007, and he was only one of many Shi'ite officials and leaders who visited Iran in 2007.[296] This growing Iranian influence in Iraq represented both a potential sectarian threat to Iraq's Sunnis and the potential end of Iraq's status as an Arab nation; the threat of Persia dated back long before the Sunni-Shi'a split. The visibility of Iran's presence in Iraq—be it aid, language, or weaponry—prompted some Sunnis to state that Iran was the biggest winner in the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. An article in the *Chicago Tribune* summarized this viewpoint as follows:

> Iran barely had to lift a finger to win this round in its centuries old rivalry with Iraq. By removing the two staunchly Sunni regimes ruling Iran's neighbors—the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Ba'athists in Iraq—the US eliminated the two biggest security threats to Iran's borders within a period of less than two years.
>
> The advent of democracy in Iraq further leveraged Iran's influence, by installing in Baghdad a Shi'ite dominated government, many of whose leaders had been sheltered

in Iran during the years they stood in opposition to Saddam Hussein's regime, disposing them toward friendship with Iran.[297]

Hezbollah in Iraq

The presence of Hezbollah in Iraq was suspected as early as November 2006, when an anonymous U.S. intelligence official stated that Hezbollah had been training Sadrist militias, coinciding with a statement by a mid-level Mahdi Army official that the group had sent 300 men to Lebanon for training.[298]

In early July, Brig. Gen. Kevin J. Bergner said that Tehran was using Hezbollah in Iraq as a proxy to carry out attacks and train and arm Shi'ite militants. Bergner asserted that Hezbollah was receiving aid from Iran's elite Qods Force. Bergner said that Hezbollah did not seem to have a strong presence in Iraq, but that it was "being used specifically as a proxy by the Qods Force."[299] Bergner also claimed that Iraqis were taken to Iran in groups of 20 to 60 for training in three camps near Iran and that senior leadership in Iran was aware of this. Bergner said that since February, 18 "higher-level operatives" from al-Khazali's group had been arrested and three others killed.[300]

The MEK Problem

While the United States accused the Iranian Qods force of operating on Iraqi soil, the Iraqi government took steps to prosecute members of an Iranian opposition group that had been operating out of a U.S.–secured compound north of Baghdad. In mid-March 2007, the Iraqi government announced that it would prosecute some 100 members of the 3,800-strong e Khalq (MEK) opposition group.

The MEK was founded in 1965 by students at Tehran University as an opposition movement against the U.S.–backed Iranian Shah. It acted as a terrorist group, focused largely on Iranian targets but sometimes killing U.S. officers and personnel working in Iran. It initially supported the Islamic government of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, which was established after the Shah fell in 1979, but then waged a series of terrorist attacks on the new government until it was pushed out of the country. In 1986, toward the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the MEK moved its headquarters to Iraq under the protection of Saddam Hussein.

The United States had long listed the MEK as a terrorist group before it invaded Iraq in 2003, and the U.S. military had guarded the MEK compound in Iraq since Saddam's fall. The MEK had turned over its weapons to the United States after the invasion, and it was given the status of "protected persons" under the Geneva Convention.

Prime Minister al-Maliki gave the group six months to leave Iraq shortly after he entered office in May 2006, but the MEK said his request violated their status under the Geneva Convention. Al-Maliki and the Iraqi Justice Department, however, maintained that the MEK had committed human rights abuses, which involved aiding Hussein's campaign against the Shi'ite uprising in the early 1990s. The United States did not indicate that it would get involved in the dispute.[301]

International Support and the Spread of the Insurgency

U.S. officials and other officials stated repeatedly during 2007 that al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia received an increasing amount of contributions from Muslims outside Iraq. A senior counterterrorism official said that al-Qa'ida's "success in Iraq and Afghanistan was the reason people are contributing money again, with money and private contributions coming back in from the Gulf."[302] U.S. officials also claimed that al-Qa'ida's command base in Pakistan was increasingly being funded by donations to the anti-American insurgency in Iraq, as well as cash obtained through criminal activity such as the kidnapping of wealthy Iraqis.[303]

The insurgency was not only being funded by groups abroad, but had the support of outside networks that formally and informally shared tactics and information and provided some manpower. At the same time, there were also cases where Iraqi insurgents played a role in terrorist activities and attacks outside Iraq. In April 2007, Saudi government officials arrested 172 men; some appeared to have been trained in Iraq and had planned to attack oil installations, public officials, and military posts. European officials reported trying to monitor small numbers of Muslim men who have returned from traveling in Iraq, where they were suspected of fighting alongside insurgents.[304]

On May 20, the leader of Fatah al Islam, Shakir al-Abassi, led attacks on Lebanese forces in a refugee camp near Tripoli. Al-Abassi had connections to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and Fatah al-Islam included as many as 50 militants who previously fought in the Iraq insurgency. Dr. Mohammad al-Massari, a Saudi dissident in Britain who runs the Internet forum Tajdeed.net, said,

> You have 50 fighters from Iraq in Lebanon now, but with good caution I can say there are a hundred times that many, 5,000 or higher, who are just waiting for the right moment to act. . . The flow of fighters is already going back and forth, and the fight will be everywhere until the United States is willing to cease and desist.[305]

On May 28, Spanish police arrested 16 men, most of them Moroccans, who were suspected of spreading propaganda calling for Islamic jihad and recruiting volunteers to fight in Iraq and other countries. Spanish officials say that the videos made by groups linked to or inspired by al-Qa'ida indicated that Spain is a target of Islamic extremists. Terrorism experts see Spain's fast-growing Moroccan population of more than half a million to be a potential pool for militant groups and a financing hub for such groups.[306]

Instructional videos and electronic newsletters put out by Iraqi insurgents were discovered on the Internet, describing techniques for building weapons such as booby-trapped bombs and surface-to-air missiles. Also, tactics common in Iraq are appearing in areas such as Somalia and Algeria.[307]

13

Evolving Insurgent and Militia Tactics

The previous chapters have shown how the parties driving the insurgency and civil conflict steadily improved their tactics and approaches to warfare. These changes can be divided into two broad groups. The first were changes in the way the insurgents pursued their goal of blocking the Iraqi political process and creating the kind of political conditions that might drive the Coalition out of Iraq. The second were changes in the way the insurgency dealt with the more military aspects of asymmetric warfare.

The end result is a wide mix of tactics that are used by insurgents to create civil unrest, by criminal gangs, by Shi'ite militias in reprisal attacks, and by all the conflicting groups in Iraq in sectarian and ethnic cleansing. It is insurgent tactics, however, which have done the most to drive the escalating violence in Iraq. Almost from the beginning, Iraqi insurgents, terrorists, and extremists exploited the fact that the media tends to focus on dramatic incidents with high casualties, gives them high publicity, and spends little time analyzing the patterns in the insurgency.

IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND INFORMATION WARFARE

The goals that have shaped the strategy and tactics used by the various insurgent groups and militias have evolved since the fall of Saddam Hussein. The most serious shifts in goals were broadening the focus of the attacks to include the new Iraqi government, the Iraqi forces, and the supporters of the new government, and a growing focus on provoking sectarian and ethnic conflict and civil war. As has been discussed earlier, the insurgents came to make more and more use of political, psychological, and information warfare to try to drive the Coalition out of Iraq, disrupt the new political process, and encourage sectarian and ethnic violence.

Beginning in mid-to-late 2005, as the violence shifted toward low-level civil conflict in general, the identities of the attackers were often difficult to discern. While roadside bombings and suicide attacks still took place, the increase in abductions and assassinations of civilian Iraqis, many taken in broad daylight in front of their houses or businesses, seemed to be the dominant trends. A mix of Sunni insurgents, Islamist extremists, Shi'ite militias, and organized criminal gangs played roles in this cycle of sectarian conflict characterized by attacks and reprisals.

While various insurgent elements did have different priorities and evolved different approaches to warfare, they came to exploit the following methods and tactics relating to political, psychological, and information warfare:

- **Attack the structures of governance and security by ideological, political, and violent means:** Use ideological and political means to attack the legitimacy of the government and the nation-building process. Intimidate and subvert the military and security forces. Intimidate and attack government officials and institutions at the national, regional, and local levels. Strike at infrastructure, utilities, and services in ways that appear to show the government cannot provide essential economic services or personal security. A July 2005 letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi from Ayman al-Zawahiri admonished the al-Qa'ida in Iraq leader for focusing too much on military attacks and not enough on political actions. In the letter, al-Zawahiri said freeing the country from Americans "does not depend on force alone" and urged al-Zarqawi to "direct the political action equally with the military action."[1]
- **Create alliances of convenience and informal networks with other groups to attack the United States, various elements of the Iraqi Interim Government and elected government, and efforts at nation building:** The informal common fronts operate on the principle that the "enemy of my enemy" is my temporary friend. At the same time, movements "franchise" to create individual cells and independent units, creating diverse mixes of enemies that are difficult to attack.
- **Attack Iraqi elites and ethnic and sectarian fault lines; use them to prevent nation building and governance by provoking civil war. Focus attacks on religious leaders, gatherings, and mosques:** As the United States and the Coalition phased down their role, and a sovereign Iraqi government increased its influence and power, insurgents increasingly shifted their focus of their attacks to Iraqi government targets, as well as Iraqi military, police, and security forces. At the same time, they stepped up attacks designed to prevent Sunnis from participating in the new government, and to cause growing tension and conflict between Sunni and Shi'ite, and Arab and Kurd.

  There are no clear lines of division between insurgents, but the Iraqi Sunni insurgents focused heavily on attacking the emerging Iraqi process of governance, while Islamist extremist movements used suicide bombing attacks and other bombings to cause large casualties among the Shi'ite and Kurdish populations—sometimes linking them to religious festivals or holidays and sometimes to attacks on Iraqi forces or their recruiting efforts. They also focused their attacks to strike at leading Shi'ite and Kurdish political officials, commanders, and clergy.

  Targeting other groups like Shi'ites and Kurds, using car bombings for mass killings, and hitting shrines and festivals, forces the dispersal of security forces, makes the areas involved seem insecure, undermines efforts at governance, and offers the possibility of

using civil war as a way to defeat the Coalition and the Iraqi Interim Government's efforts at nation building.

For example, a step up in Sunni attacks on Shi'ite targets after the January 30, 2005, election led some Shi'ites to talk about "Sunni ethnic cleansing." This effect was compounded by bloody suicide bombings, many of which had some form of government target, but killed large numbers of Shi'ite civilians.[2] These attacks included the discovery of 58 corpses dumped in the Tigris, and 19 largely Shi'ite National Guardsmen bodies in a soccer stadium in Haditha. They also included a bombing in Hilla on March 1, 2005, that killed 136—mostly Shi'ite police and army recruits.[3]

Similar attacks were carried against the Kurds. While the Kurds maintained notably better security over their areas in the north than existed in the rest of the country, two suicide bombers still penetrated a political gathering in Irbil on February 1, 2004, killing at least 105. On March 10, 2005, a suicide bomber killed 53 Kurds in Kirkuk. On May 3, 2005, another suicide bomber—this time openly identified with the Sunni extremist group Ansar al-Sunna—blew himself up outside a recruiting station in Irbil, killing 60 and wounding more than 150 others.[4] At the same time, other attacks systematically targeted Kurdish leaders and Kurdish elements in Iraqi forces.

By May 2005, Shi'ites had begun to retaliate, in spite of efforts to avoid this by Shi'ite leaders, contributing further to the problems in establishing a legitimate government and national forces. Sunni and Shi'ite bodies were discovered in unmarked graves and killings struck at both Sunni and Shi'ite clergy.[5]

In addition to assassinations aimed at disrupting the judicial and political process, insurgents have carried out assassinations of religious leaders as part of their larger goal of using sectarian violence to provoke a civil war. At the beginning of July 2005, according to some reports, more than 60 Sunni imams had been killed since the start of the insurgency.[6] There is no one date at which the efforts to create sectarian violence became critical, but there was a significant up-turn in the assassination of clerics and imams of both Sunni and Shi'ite sects in the late summer and early fall of 2005:

- July 19, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Sheikh Ahmad al-Juburi, the imam at Al-Taqwa Mosque in Al-Dawrah in southern Baghdad.
- August 17, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Ali al-Shimmari, a local imam and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, in northeastern Baghdad.
- September 1, 2005: Gunmen kill Sheikh Salim Nusayyif Jasim al-Tamimi, the imam of Al-Mustafa Mosque in Baghdad and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars.
- September 15, 2005: A bomb explodes at Rawdat al-Wadi Mosque in Mosul, killing Sheikh Hikmat Husayn Ali, the imam of the mosque.
- September 16, 2005: Insurgents kill Fadhil Amshani, a Shi'ite cleric and follower of Moqtada al-Sadr.
- October 2, 2005: Gunmen in southeast Baghdad kill Salah Hassan Ayash, a Sunni imam.
- October 29, 2005: A suicide bomber strikes a small marketplace near a Shi'ite mosque in Huweder, six miles north of Baquba, killing at least 25 and wounding 45.
- November 3, 2005: A suicide bomber driving a minibus detonates his explosives outside a Shi'ite mosque in Musayyib, south of Baghdad, killing 20 and wounding

64. The mosque was the site of a previous explosion in July, when a suicide bomber blew up a fuel tanker nearby, killing 54 people.

- November 9, 2005: Two car bombs explode near a Shi'ite mosque in Baghdad, killing six people.
- November 14, 2005: Insurgents kill the administrator of Al-Hamid Mosque in the Al-Saydiyah neighborhood of Baghdad.
- November 18, 2005: Suicide bombers strike two mosques in the largely Kurdish town of Khanaqin, near the Iranian border. The attacks, against the Sheik Murad and Khanaqin Grand mosques kill at least 80 Shi'ite worshippers and wound more than 100. A third would-be suicide bomber is arrested shortly after the attacks.
- November 19, 2005: A suicide bomber strikes a crowd of Shi'ite mourners in the village of Abu Saida, near Baquba, killing at least 36 people.
- November 23, 2005: Gunmen wearing Iraqi Army uniforms burst into the home of Khadim Sarhid al-Hemaiyem, a Sunni and the head of Iraq's Batta clan, killing him along with three of his sons and his son-in-law.
- November 26, 2005: In Basra, Iraqi police discover the body of Sheikh Nadir Karim, the imam of a Sunni mosque. Karim had been abducted from his home the previous night.
- November 28, 2005: Gunmen kidnap Shihab Abdul-Hussein, a member of the Badr Organization, in Baghdad.
- November 28, 2005: In Dora, a neighborhood in southwest Baghdad, insurgents ambush a bus carrying British Muslims to Shi'ite shrines, killing two and wounding four.
- November 29, 2005: In Fallujah, armed men kill Sheikh Hamza Abbas Issawi, a Sunni cleric who called for Sunni participation in the upcoming parliamentary elections.
- December 4, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen kill Sheik Abdul-Salam Abdul-Hussein, a Shi'ite Muslim candidate running in the upcoming general elections and a follower of Moqtada al-Sadr.

Although much of the upsurge in violence in late November was a deliberate attempt by insurgents to disrupt the upcoming December 15 parliamentary elections, some of the rise in sectarian violence was due to the U.S. discovery on November 13 of 173 mostly Sunni malnourished and abused detainees in an Interior Ministry prison in Baghdad. The discovery of the secret torture center run by Shi'ite-led government security forces sparked renewed sectarian violence and led to a number of tit-for-tat murders in late November.

The bombing of the "Golden Shrine" on February 22, 2006, led to the killing of hundreds of Iraqi civilians in only a few days in what was the worst sectarian violence since the fall of Saddam. Attacks were mixed and consisted of large-scale bombings and mortar attacks as well as mystery killings, assassinations, and gunfights. Although a precise count of incidents in impossible, some included the following:

- February 23, 2006: The bombing of a Sunni mosque in Baqouba kills eight Iraqi soldiers and wounds nearly a dozen. At least 47 bodies are found scattered across

Iraq late Wednesday and early Thursday, many of them shot execution-style and dumped in Shi'ite-dominated parts of the capital. The individuals, both Shi'ites and Sunnis, are forced from their vehicles on the way to a protest and shot.

- February 24, 2006: Three Sunni mosques in southern Baghdad are attacked and mortar rounds land near the Shi'ite shrine of Salman al-Farisi. Gunmen storm a house south of Baghdad and shoot dead five Shi'ite men. Police find at least 27 bodies in Baghdad and other cities and towns.
- February 25, 2006: The bodies of 14 slain police commandos are found near their three burned vehicles near a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad, and 11 other bodies are discovered in various locations across Baghdad. A car bomb kills at least four people in the Shi'ite holy city of Karbala, and 13 members of a Shi'ite family are massacred in the town of Baqouba. At least 21 other people die in small-scale shootings and bombings across Baghdad.
- February 26, 2006: Mortars slammed into crowded Baghdad neighborhoods killing 18 people and injuring dozens. At least seven mortar rounds hit in a Shi'ite enclave of Dora, a predominantly Sunni Arab district and one of the most dangerous parts of the city. Fifteen people are reported killed and 45 are injured.

Although the days immediately following the shrine bombing led to a new peak in sectarian violence, they were followed by a steady flow of attacks on targets like mosques and religious leaders. The primary method of Shi'ite retaliation was the use of "death squads" or militias to round up and kill Sunnis. While Shi'ite mosques and religious gatherings were often the targets of suicide bombers, Sunni clerics were frequently the targets of assassins or gunmen. On March 2 U.S. Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch confirmed that since the Golden Mosque bombing there were 33 attacks on mosques, with two destroyed and seven sustaining significant damage. As the civil war intensified, mosque bombings and attacks on religious figures continued. The following events are only a fraction of the attacks that helped push the country deeper into civil war:

- March 4, 2006: Two mosques in the city of Kirkuk are attacked. Gunmen in a red car fire on a funeral at the Shi'ite Turkoman Ahl al-Bayat mosque, killing two people and wounding three. Around the same time, gunmen spray a Sunni mosque with bullets; no one was injured.
- March 5, 2006: Men wearing military uniforms and driving Interior Ministry cars storm the al-Nour mosque, a Sunni mosque, in the Jihad neighborhood in west Baghdad, killing three and wounding seven in a 25-minute gun battle. The mosque's imam and his son are among the dead. Two relatives of a top Sunni cleric are slain in a drive-by shooting.
- March 9, 2006: A bombing kills three people and injures ten others near a Sunni mosque in a predominantly Shi'ite neighborhood in southeastern Baghdad.
- March 17, 2006: In Sunni Muslim areas of western Baghdad, gunmen in passing automobiles kill three Shi'ite Muslim pilgrims and wound five others. To the south, bombs in a minibus and along the pilgrimage road kill two people and wound nine.
- March 18, 2006: Shi'ite Muslims heading to the holy city of Karbala come under attack with a roadside bomb, killing one and wounding five.

- March 22, 2006: Gunmen in western Baghdad attack a truck carrying Shi'ite Muslim pilgrims returning from a religious ceremony in Karbala, killing one and wounding ten.
- March 23, 2006: A car bomb strikes outside a Shi'ite Muslim mosque in Shurta; at least six people are killed and more than 20 are wounded.
- March 24, 2006: A bomb outside of a Sunni mosque in Khalis, northeast of Baghdad, kills 5 and wounds 12.
- March 25, 2006: Gunmen in west Baghdad kill a Sunni mosque preacher.
- April 1, 2006: Gunmen attack a minibus carrying Shi'ites northeast of Baghdad, killing six men and wounding one woman. A Sunni sheik is killed in a drive-by shooting in Basra.
- April 2, 2006: In Baquba, gunmen blow up the Guba Shi'ite mosque. Gunmen assassinate a Sunni Arab sheik, Abdul-Minaam Awad.
- April 3, 2006: A car bomb detonates near a Shi'ite mosque in the Shaab neighborhood, killing 10 and wounding 13. Sheik Omar Abdul-Razzaq Qaisi, a prominent Shi'ite cleric, is killed in Kirkuk.
- April 6, 2006: A car bomb explodes near the sacred Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, killing 10 and injuring 30.
- April 7, 2006: Three suicide bombers target the Baratha mosque in Baghdad, a primary headquarters for SCIRI, killing more than 80 and wounding more than 140. The Iraqi Health Ministry stated that 90 were killed and over 170 wounded. At least two of the bombers were dressed as women to hide the bombs; they slipped into the mosque as the worshippers left. The first bomb detonated at the main exit, and the second detonated inside the mosque as people rushed back in for safety. Ten seconds later, the third bomb exploded.
- April 8, 2006: A car bomb kills 6 people and wounds 14 near a Shi'ite shrine south of Baghdad.
- April 9, 2006: A bombing targets police near a Sunni mosque in the western neighborhood of Ghazaliyah, wounding at least three people.
- April 12, 2006: A car bomb explodes in a crowd leaving evening prayer at a Shi'ite mosque in Huwaider, near Baquba, killing at least 20 and wounding 40.
- April 14, 2006: In Baquba, two bombs explode outside two Sunni mosques, killing four and wounding six.
- April 20, 2006: Gunmen attack a Sunni mosque in the southern Baghdad district of Saidiya, sparking an hour-long clash with mosque guards and residents.
- April 26, 2006: A string of evening shootings in Baghdad kills six Iraqis, including a Sunni cleric.
- May 7, 2006: In Karbala, a suicide car bomber targeting the Shi'ite Ahl al-Bait mosque blows himself up early when his car becomes stuck in traffic. Witnesses say more than 20 are killed, while a local hospital said three are killed, and 23 are wounded. U.S. reports indicate that 2 are killed and 18 are wounded.
- May 29, 2006: 12 Iraqis die and 25 are wounded in a car bombing outside the Abu Hanifa mosque in Adhamiya, a Sunni stronghold in north Baghdad.

- June 6, 2006: Inside a Shi'a mosque in Buratha, a suicide bomber kills at least 11 people.
- June 16, 2006: A suicide bomber attacks a Shi'ite mosque in central Baghdad shortly after the start of Friday prayers, killing 11 and wounding at least 20 others.
- June 23, 2006: A bomb strikes the Grand Habib mosque, a Sunni mosque in Diyala Province, northeast of Baghdad, killing 10 and wounding 15.
- July 6, 2006: Twelve are killed and 41 are wounded after a car bomb explodes at the Maithem Al-Tamar shrine in Kufa, near Najaf. The attack appears to target Shi'a pilgrims from Iran.
- July 8, 2006: A car bomb explodes outside a Shi'ite mosque in Baghdad, killing three people.
- August 19–20, 2006: Twenty are killed and 300 are wounded in a two-day period when gunmen attack Shi'a pilgrims visiting the grave of Imam Mousa Al-Kadhum during a Shi'a festivity.
- September 11, 2006: An assault late in the day on a Shi'ite mosque in Bani Saad, just south of Baquba, involving mortar rounds and assault rifles kills seven. Additional explosives damage the structure of the mosque.
- November 17, 2006: Gunmen kill Omar al-Falahi, a mosque preacher in Fallujah.
- November 18, 2006: Gunmen shoot dead a leading member of SCIRI, Ali al-Adhadh, and his wife as they drive through western Baghdad.
- November 24, 2006: Shi'ite gunmen attack four mosques in the Hurriya neighborhood of Baghdad, destroying two. Several are killed, but casualty figures varied greatly. Reports say that the militiamen post pictures of al-Sadr inside the mosques after they attacked. Shi'ite gunmen also fire on a Sunni mosque in Baquba. Sunni insurgents respond by destroying the minaret of a Shi'ite mosque in Baquba. Others reports say that mortars landed on a mosque in the Ghazaliya neighborhood in Baghdad run by the Association of Muslim Scholars. A roadside bomb damages a Sunni mosque in Kirkuk.
- December 4, 2006: Gunmen kidnap an imam of a Sunni mosque in the town of Yathrib, near Balad.
- December 5, 2006: Gunmen ambush a bus carrying employees for the Shi'ite Endowment, a religious body that oversees Shi'ite mosques, in northern Baghdad, killing 14 people and wounding 4, the organization said. An Interior Ministry source says 15 are killed and 7 are wounded in the attack in Qahira district.
- December 17, 2006: Gunmen kill Alaa Muhsin, a Sunni sheikh from the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, and Sheikh Ismail al- Khanfashi, deputy head of an Iraqi nongovernmental organization (NGO).
- January 10, 2007: Gunmen attack Shi'ite pilgrims heading toward Karbala, killing 11 and injuring 4.
- January 19, 2007: An official in the office of Moqtada al-Sadr says a Shi'ite mosque in the southern Baghdad district of Dora is badly damaged in an explosion. It was empty and there are no casualties. The preacher of a Sunni mosque in a mainly Shi'ite district of Kirkuk is shot dead in his home.

- January 29, 2007: Five worshippers are killed when a rocket-propelled grenade hits a Shi'ite mosque in the town of Tuz Khurmato.
- January 30, 2007: Police say a mortar round wounds nine pilgrims when it lands in Kadhimiya, a Shi'ite neighborhood in northern Baghdad. At least four Shi'ite pilgrims are killed and nine are wounded when gunmen open fire on two minibuses near the southern Baghdad district of Bayaa. At least 13 people, including 3 women, are killed and 39 are wounded, when a roadside bomb explodes by a procession of Shi'ites marking the climax of the Ashura ceremony in the ethnically mixed town of Khanaqin northeast of Baghdad. A suicide bomber kills at least 23 worshippers and wounds 57 others when he blows himself up at a Shi'ite mosque in the town of Balad Ruz.
- March 5, 2007: Gunmen open fire on pilgrims heading to the holy city of Karbala, killing five and wounding 17 others in two separate incidents in southern Baghdad. A roadside bomb also explodes near pilgrims heading to Karbala, killing at least 2 people and wounding 10 others in central Baghdad. Gunmen also attack pilgrims in the town of Latifiya, killing 3 people and wounding 13 others in two different incidents.
- March 7, 2007: Gunmen wound six pilgrims in Baghdad as they were heading to the holy city of Karbala to commemorate the Arbain, the end of 40 days of mourning since Ashura. A suicide car bomber kills one policeman and wounds 17, including 10 policemen, in Saidiya in southern Baghdad. The bomber targets police who were marshalling Shi'ite pilgrims walking to Karbala; the wounded include seven pilgrims. Gunmen targeting Shi'ite Muslim pilgrims kill one pilgrim and wound three others in the Nahdha area of central Baghdad. Insurgents ambush Shi'ite Muslim pilgrims in southern Baghdad, killing seven and wounding 27 others with a roadside bomb.
- March 13, 2007: A Sunni mosque is badly damaged when gunmen plant bombs inside it in the town of Iskandariya.
- March 17, 2007: A Sunni mosque in the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Doura is destroyed by explosives.
- March 19, 2007: A bomb in a plastic bag inside a Shi'ite mosque kills 4 people and wounds 25 others in central Baghdad.
- March 24, 2007: A suicide truck bomber explodes near a Shi'ite mosque in the town of Haswa. The following day, a Sunni mosque in Haswa is bombed in an apparent revenge attack.
- March 26, 2007: Gunmen kill an adviser for the Sunni Endowment, an organization that manages Sunni religious sites, along with two other employees in a drive-by shooting in Adhamiya in northern Baghdad, the Sunni Endowment said.
- March 28, 2007: Gunmen kill Nawaf al-Hadidi, imam of a mosque in Mosul, in a drive-by shooting.
- April 6, 2007: Gunmen shoot dead tribal leader Sheikh Ghazi al- Hanash as he is leaving a mosque in southeastern Mosul.
- April 13, 2007: Gunmen shoot dead Mohammed Abd al-Hameed, a mosque imam in Mosul, as he was on his way to his mosque. Hameed was also a well-known figure in the Sunni Muslim Scholars Association.

- May 3, 2007: Gunmen kill the imam of a Sunni mosque when they storm the mosque in the Mansour district of western Baghdad.
- May 4, 2007: Gunmen kidnap two guards and set a Shi'ite mosque on fire in the mostly Sunni district of Adhamiya in western Baghdad.
- May 21, 2007: Police find the body of the imam of a mosque in predominantly Sunni Arab Buhriz, south of Baquba, who had been abducted.
- May 28, 2007: A truck bomb kills 24 people and wounds 90 others near the Sunni Abdul Qadir al-Gailani mosque in central Baghdad.
- June 2, 2007: Gunmen kill Sheikh Ali Khudher al-Zand, imam of a Sunni mosque, in al-Khadhraa district in western Baghdad on Saturday.
- June 8, 2007: An armed group blows up the Sunni Fatah-Basha mosque in Bayaa in southern Baghdad.
- June 13, 2007: The Askariya shrine in Samarra is blown up for a second time, destroying its two minarets.
- June 14, 2007: Three Sunni Muslim mosques are attacked and burned by unidentified gunmen in Iskandariya.
- June 19, 2007: A truck bomb kills 87 people and wounds 214 near the Shi'ite Khilani mosque in central Baghdad.
- July 2, 2007: Gunmen kill the preacher of a Sunni mosque in the northern city of Kirkuk.

- **Link asymmetric warfare to crime and looting; exploit poverty and economic desperation:** Use criminals to support attacks on infrastructure and nation-building activity, raise funds, and undermine security. Exploit unemployment to strengthen dedicated insurgent and terrorist cells. Blur the lines between threat forces, criminal elements, and part-time forces.
- **Attack petroleum and oil facilities, electric power, water, and other critical infrastructure:** As the previous chapters have shown in detail, attacks on petroleum, power, and water facilities were used to both offset the impact of U.S. aid and direct Iraqi anger against the government. Al-Qa'ida and Ba'athist groups found oil facilities and pipelines to be particularly attractive targets.

  Insurgents carried out more than 300 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities between March 2003 and January 2006. An estimate by Robert Mullen indicated that there were close to 500 and perhaps as many as 600–700. His breakdown of the number of attacks follows: pipelines, 398; refineries, 36; oil wells, 18; tanker trucks, 30; oil train, 1; storage tanks 4; and tank farm, 1. In addition, there were at least 64 incidents in which the victims were related to Iraq's petroleum sector, ranging from high-ranking persons in the Oil Ministry to oil workers at refineries, pipelines, and elsewhere in the sector, to contract, military, police, and tribal security people. The number killed in these directed attacks reached at least 100.[7]

  The end result was that oil production dropped by 8 percent in 2005, and pipeline shipments through the Iraqi northern pipeline to Ceyan in Turkey dropped from 800,000 barrels per day before the war to an average of 40,000 barrels per day in 2005. In July 2005, Iraqi officials estimated that insurgent attacks had already cost Iraq some $11 billion. Attacks kept Iraqi oil production from approaching the 3 million barrel a

day goal in 2005 that the Coalition had set after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and production had dropped from prewar levels of around 2.5 million barrels a day to an average of 1.83 million barrels a day in 2005, and only 1.57 million barrels a day in December 2005.[8] These successes have a major impact in a country where 94 percent of the government's direct income now comes from oil exports. Attacks on pipelines also took place, costing billions of dollars in lost exports and slowing the rehabilitation of Iraq's dilapidated oil infrastructure.[9]

Between the March 2003 invasion and the end of 2005, the continuing threat to electric facilities, rolling power cuts in most areas, and major shortages forced many Iraqis to rely on home or neighborhood generators even in the areas with power. It was also a reason that the United States was able to spend only $1.0 billion of $4.4 billion in programmed aid money on the electricity sector by the end of April 2005, and $261 million out of $1.7 billion on the petroleum sector.[10]

Sabotage and theft helped cripple many of the country's 229 operating water plants by the spring of 2005. Some 90 percent of the municipalities in the country lacked working sewage processing plants, contaminating the main sources of water as they drained into the Tigris and Euphrates.

Oil pipelines in the northern part of the country came under repeated attacks in late 2005. According to Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, the upsurge in attacks began in mid-August, following the deadline for writing Iraq's constitution. Between August 15 and September 7, there were more than ten attacks on pipelines.[11]

The situation continued to deteriorate as the date of the referendum approached. The pipelines, linking oil fields in Kirkuk to Iraq's largest oil refinery in Beiji and the Turkish port of Ceyhan, were disrupted more than half-a-dozen times during September and October 2005:[12]

- September 3, 2005: Insurgents bomb the main pipeline running from Kirkuk to Ceyhan, disrupting Iraqi oil exports for more than two weeks and costing billions of dollars in lost revenue.
- September 13, 2005: A fire breaks out after a pipeline carrying crude oil from Kirkuk to a Beiji refinery sprang a leak.
- September 15, 2005: Another fire breaks out in an oil pipeline in Kirkuk; the cause of the fire is unknown.
- September 21, 2005: A bomb planted by insurgents damages an oil pipeline connecting the Bay Hassan oil fields to Kirkuk. Repairs are expected to take up to a week.
- October 6, 2005: Insurgents bomb a pipeline near Kirkuk.
- October 12, 2005: An explosion shuts down an oil pipeline near the city of Beiji.
- October 20, 2005: Insurgents bomb a pipeline linking Kirkuk to Beiji.
- October 25, 2005: Insurgents bomb the Beiji petroleum refinery, killing at least five.

On the eve of the October referendum, insurgents attacked Baghdad's electrical grid. In a tactic designed to disrupt the vote, insurgents sabotaged power lines and electricity towers north of the capital, leaving 70 percent of the city in the dark.[13] Even before the attack, however, the amount of electricity Baghdad received was a major bone of contention, with daily electricity service in the capital averaging less than 8 hours per day compared to the national average of 14 hours.[14]

Insurgents proved increasingly adept at exploiting the country's fuel crisis in late December 2005 and early January 2006. Oil exports fell from their postwar average of about 1.6 mbpd (million barrels per day) to 1.2 mbpd in November 2005 and 1.1 mbpd in December, the lowest since the country resumed exports after the U.S.–led invasion.[15] A total of 508 million barrels were exported in 2005, down from the 533 million barrels sold the previous year. As a whole, Iraqi oil production fell 8 percent in 2005.[16]

Exports from oil fields in the south, which produce the majority of Iraqi oil, fell from 514 million barrels in 2004 to 496 million in 2005. Northern production dropped from 19 million to 12 million. The drop in production for the southern oil fields was attributed to bad weather in the Gulf and a lack of electricity to run the refineries. Sabotage and persistent attacks by insurgents were blamed for the decline in the north.[17] In late December, Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum announced that Iraq hoped to produce at least 2.5 million barrels of oil per day by the end of 2006. Only weeks before, however, he had said the country hoped to turn out 3.0 million barrels per day by the end of the next year, reaching 3.5 mbpd by December 2007.[18]

On December 18, 2005, only three days after parliamentary elections, the Iraqi government raised the price of gasoline, diesel, kerosene, and cooking gas. The Iraqi government had continued Saddam Hussein's policy of subsidizing fuel prices, but faced growing pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and others to increase the price of fuel.[19] The price of imported gasoline was raised fivefold, while the price of locally produced gasoline rose sevenfold. Kerosene prices increased fivefold and cooking gas increased threefold.[20] The price hike sparked violent demonstrations in several cities, including Tikrit and Amarah. Iraq's oil minister spoke out against the price hikes and threatened to resign in protest.

The fuel crisis was compounded a few days later on December 21, when the Oil Ministry was forced to close the country's largest oil refinery after tanker-truck drivers went on strike. Although insurgents have repeatedly attacked oil installations in the north, they stepped up their threats to attack drivers in late December as part of an effort to take advantage of the fuel price hike and the public's anger.[21] The closure of the Beiji refinery, which normally produces 8.5 million liters of petrol per day along with 7.5 million liters of diesel, cost the Iraqi government some $18 million a day.[22] On December 30, the government relieved Bahr al-Ulum of his duties for 30 days as oil minister, putting Ahmed Chalabi, the deputy premier, in charge.[23] As mentioned above, al-Ulum had been critical of the government's decision to reduce fuel subsidies.

Protests, many of which turned violent, continued throughout the country into early January. In Kirkuk, the governor was forced to impose an overnight curfew after fuel riots on January 1 killed at least one person and wounded four others. In Basra, 1,000 people burned tires to protest the price increases.[24] Insurgents responded by stepping up the number of attacks against the oil infrastructure, blowing up an oil pipeline near a Baghdad refinery, and setting two petrol stations, along with offices belonging to the national oil company, on fire in Kirkuk in early January. Threats by insurgents led to the shutdown of Iraq's most productive oil facility in Baiji.[25] Although the truck drivers returned to work on January 3, the insurgents continued their attacks, ambushing three separate convoys and killing at least two

tanker-drivers the following day.[26] A sixty-tanker convoy on its way to Baghdad hit an improvised explosive device (IED) on January 4. Upon stopping, another tanker was hit by a rocket. Police and oil officials reported that 20 tankers were destroyed, but an Oil Ministry spokesman, Asim Jihad, disputed that claim stating that convoys usually are no bigger than ten tankers and suggested that only one tanker was hit.[27]

Iraqi oil production fell by 8 percent in 2005, with a sharp decline near year's end that left average daily production at half the 3 million barrels envisioned by U.S. officials at the outset of the war in 2003. Reasons for the shortfall include the poor state of the nation's oil fields, a creaky infrastructure, poor management, and ongoing insurgent attacks.[28] The average oil production for the first four months of 2006 was 1.9 mbpd, well short of the Iraqi Ministry of Oil goal of 2.5 mbpd. At the same time, exports increased from an average of 1.2 mbpd in the first quarter to 1.4 mbpd.[29]

The May 2006 "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report to Congress noted that monthly attacks against infrastructure had been declining since August 2005 and that by May 2006 such attacks accounted for only 1 percent of overall insurgent attacks.[30] Some of these included the following:

- February 1, 2006: A homemade bomb blows up a section of pipeline linking a Baghdad oil refinery to a power station south of the capital, disrupting electricity supplies for thousands of Iraqis in several southern Iraqi cities.
- February 2, 2006: A mortar attack sets ablaze a major petroleum facility in the northern city of Kirkuk, stopping refining at the plant. Mortar rounds also hit an important pipeline to Turkey that was already out of commission and was being repaired.
- February 17, 2006: Insurgents blow up the main pipeline feeding crude oil from the northern oil fields of Kirkuk to a refinery in the southern Baghdad suburb of Dora and stopping the flow of oil.
- March 8, 2006: A bomb explodes at the Basra headquarters of Iraq's South Oil Co., causing minor damage but no casualties.
- March 31, 2006: In the outskirts of Baghdad, insurgents set off explosives underneath an oil pipeline that runs from Beiji to the Dora district in southern Baghdad.
- May 24, 2006: A bomb explosion sets fire to an oil pipeline in Latifiya.

The impact of such attacks has been further compounded the ability of insurgents to steal oil and fuel. The *New York Times* quoted Ali Allawi, Iraq's Finance Minister, as estimating that insurgents were taking some 40–50 percent of all oil-smuggling profits in the country and had infiltrated senior management positions at the major northern refinery in Baji: "It's gone beyond Nigeria levels now where it really threatens national security . . . The insurgents are involved at all levels." The *Times* also quoted an unidentified U.S. official as saying, "It's clear that corruption funds the insurgency, so there you have a very real threat to the new state . . . Corruption really has the potential of undercutting the growth potential here." The former Oil Minister, Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, had said earlier in 2005 that "oil and fuel smuggling networks have grown into a dangerous mafia threatening the lives of those in charge of fighting corruption."[31]

The August–November Department of Defense Quarterly Report stated that attacks on infrastructure declined in 2006. There was an average of one attack per week on infrastructure providing essential services. However, the report noted that the overall security environment prevented repairs on infrastructure and contributed to poor delivery of essential services.[32]

Production of oil dropped to only 1.9 mbpd in the spring of 2007, below the already lowered Iraqi government goal of 2.1 mbpd. Exportation also decreased, and the flow of oil to Turkey virtually ceased. There were also several Sunni insurgent attacks in March and April 2007 that targeted key bridges in Baghdad. Some of these targets were symbolic to Iraq, but they also had strategic importance in hindering the ability of U.S. and Iraqi troops to reach certain areas in the capital.

- **Strike at U.S. aid projects, nation building, and stability targets to undermine Iraqi acceptance of the MNSTC-I and the perceived legitimacy of the Iraqi government:** It was unclear just how systematic such attacks had been, but a report by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction indicated that at least 276 civilians working on U.S. aid projects had been killed by March 31, 2005, and at least 2,582 had been wounded. The number of contractors killed also rose by 19 percent (to 44) in the first quarter of 2005. The cost impact was also high. The report indicated that the security costs of USAID funded aid projects were only 4.2 percent of the total cost from March 2003 to February 2004, but rose to 22 percent during the final nine months of 2004.[33] Other reports indicated that contractors had filed 2,919 death and injury claims for U.S. and foreign workers between the beginning of the war on March 19, 2003, and May 10, 2003.[34]

  In April 2006, the Department of Defense agreed that U.S. military forces would be used to provide security for reconstruction teams being sent to Iraq to coordinate U.S. aid. The Department of Defense and Department of State had previously disagreed on whether private security forces or U.S. military service members would be used to provide the security.[35]

  As has already been discussed, however, such measures had negligible effect. The United States could not protect aid workers and again had to try to restructure its entire aid effort in the spring and summer of 2007. There is nothing new about attacking key economic targets, infrastructure, and aspects of governance critical to the functioning of the state in an effort to disrupt its economy, undermine law enforcement and security, and encourage instability. Iraqi insurgent and Islamist attacks on aid workers and projects, and their role in encouraging looting, sabotage, and theft did, however, demonstrate a growing sophistication in targeting stability efforts and tangible progress in aid and governance. These tactics also interact synergistically with the above tactics.

- **Focus on Large U.S. Installations:** As the insurgents became better organized, they moved from hit-and-run firings at U.S. installations to much larger and better organized raids that could capture major media attention even when these largely failed. The major Zarqawi organization assault on Abu Ghraib prison in early April 2005 was an example of such a raid.[36] Other examples were the suicide bombing and infiltration attacks on the "Green Zone" in Baghdad and other major U.S. military facilities in areas like Mosul. In addition, the U.S. military reported insurgent attacks on military bases in the western city of Ramadi with mortars and small arms almost immediately after the results of the December election were announced.

Despite a general shift in attacks away from Coalition forces and toward Iraqi military, police, and civilians as the insurgency continued, a plot was uncovered in March 2006 in which 421 al-Qa'ida members were "one bureaucrat's signature" away from being admitted into the Iraqi Army battalions in charge of guarding entrances to the Green Zone. These fighters then planned on storming U.S. and British embassies, taking those inside hostage.[37]

Insurgents also staged large-scale attacks on Iraqi installations as well. On March 21, 2006, nearly 100 insurgents armed with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) stormed a jail in north Baghdad, killing 20 police and a courthouse guard in a prison break that freed 33 prisoners, 18 of whom had been captured in police raids just two days earlier. The assault left 10 attackers dead. They cut the telephone wires before they entered to prevent the police from calling for backup and detonated a series of roadside bombs as they fled to prevent a chase.

The following day, U.S. and Iraqi forces trapped dozens of insurgents during a two-hour gun battle at a police station south of Baghdad. Sixty gunmen, firing rocket-propelled grenades and automatic rifles, attacked the Madain police station before dawn. U.S. troops and a special Iraqi police unit responded, capturing 50 of the insurgents. Four policemen, including one commander, were killed and five were wounded. None of the attackers were killed. In another instance the following day two policemen were killed and two were wounded when gunmen ambushed their convoy in north Baghdad. The police said that the attack was a failed attempt to free detainees being transferred.

On April 8, 2006 a Marine firefight occurred when insurgents launched an attack against the Anbar provincial government headquarters in Ramadi. A U.S. Air Force F-18 fighter bombed insurgent positions. U.S. Marines guarding the government headquarters fought back with anti-tank rockets, machine guns, and small-arms fire. In the same month, at an entrance to the capital's Green Zone, a rocket killed five people and injured three. In another instance, more than 100 insurgents fired RPGs on five police checkpoints, a police station, and an Iraqi Army building in Baquba.

On October 11, 2006, insurgents hit an ammunition dump on a U.S. base in Baghdad with a mortar round, setting off fiery explosions through the night that shook buildings miles away. No injuries were reported, but it was first large-scale attack on U.S. bases for some time, and it was followed by steadily more sophisticated attacks on U.S. facilities, including the Green Zone in Baghdad, in 2007. Some of these attacks include the following:

- March 27, 2007: A U.S. government contractor is killed as a result of a rocket attack on the Green Zone. A U.S. soldier is also killed in the Green Zone.
- April 23, 2007: Six people are killed and 14 are wounded when a suicide bomber blows himself up in a restaurant near the entrance to the Green Zone.
- May 2, 2007: Four U.S. government contractors, all from the Philippines, are killed in a rocket strike in the Green Zone.
- May 15, 2007: Five U.S. Embassy contract workers are hurt after at least one round of "indirect fire" landed in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone.
- May 16, 2007: Two Iraqis are killed and ten other people are wounded when ten mortar rounds land inside Baghdad's Green Zone.

- May 21, 2007: A mortar round hits the parliament building inside the Green Zone, but there are no casualties or damage.
- June 14, 2007: Mortars and rockets are shot into the Green Zone, causing unreported casualties.

- **Obtain and use uniforms and IDs of Iraqi security forces to gain access to restricted areas and confuse the identity of the attacker:** The use of Iraqi uniforms, security and army vehicles, false IDs, and intelligence gained from infiltrators became more sophisticated. For example, in the mainly Sunni Arab neighborhood of Toubji, dozens of armed men dressed in Interior Ministry police uniforms killed three Sunnis and abducted more than 20 in January 2006. Also in January, two suicide bombers using police identity cards and dressed in military uniforms attempted to enter an MOI building and detonate the explosives outside, killing 29 Iraqis. Next door, a ceremony honoring the 84th anniversary of the Iraqi police force was being conducted.

  Insurgents and Islamists learned that a mix of silence, multiple claims to be the attacker, new names for attacking organizations, and uncertain levels of affiliation made it harder for the United States to respond. They also produced more media coverage and speculation.

  In Iraq and elsewhere, attacks have often been accompanied by what seem to be deliberate efforts to advance conspiracy theories to confuse the identity of the attacker or to find ways to blame defenders of the United States for being attacked. In addition, conspiracy theories charging the United States with deliberately or carelessly failing to provide an adequate defense have been particularly effective.

  As sectarian conflict and low-level civil war increased, many of the abductions and killings were conducted by individuals wearing MOI commando uniforms. Although the MOI continued to deny its role in any of the violence, the strong militia presence in the security forces became a source of tension between the United States and the Shi'ite-dominated Iraqi government.

  On June 5, 2006, in the morning, less than a mile from the Green Zone in a commercial district, about 50 masked-men wearing Interior police uniforms and driving ministry vehicles cordoned off the street and abducted as many as 50 people, forcing them into the backs of trucks at gunpoint, tying some and blindfolding others. Witnesses said that there seemed to be no discretion as to who was rounded up and that the operation took less than 20 minutes. The Interior Ministry said that the area was under the jurisdiction of the Defense Ministry, but it would still open an investigation.

  In another incident, on September 12, 2006, in Baghdad, a man yelled at policemen, telling them that they were responsible for the destruction of his shop on Abu Nawas Street. The men threatened the police officers, saying that he would kill "one of them" on that day, but the officers failed to prevent him from speeding off in his car as they fired shots in his direction. Within seconds the situation deteriorated as men in blue police uniforms and black vests jumped out of a van and starting shooting randomly up and down the street, sending families and the police officers for cover. Similar situations occurred on an almost daily basis for citizens in Baghdad, leaving people with no choice but to distrust anyone wearing a blue police uniform.[38]

  In an initiative to curb the use of MOI vehicles, weapons, and uniforms by insurgents the Iraqi government started identifying official vehicles and issuing new and different uniforms, according to U.S. Army Col. Thomas Vail in an address on September 1, 2006.[39]

The new uniforms were officially put to use starting October 9, 2006. The new police garb featured camouflaged pants—similar to that worn by the U.S. military—that would be difficult to counterfeit. The uniforms had serial numbers that would be linked in a computer database to photo IDs of the officers to whom they were issued. Police vehicles were also outfitted with new identification numbers. The goal of the new equipment was to reduce the ability of sectarian militias to create counterfeit uniforms and vehicles. U.S. military officials said that they hoped the items would help increase civilian trust in Iraqi security forces.[40] Insurgents made similar use of Iraqi uniforms in 2007, and imitated even U.S. forces.

- **Use low-level killings, kidnappings, threats, disappearances, and intimidation to create added sectarian and ethnic conflict and strife:** While major attacks and the use of weapons like mortars and IEDs get the most attention, insurgent groups also seem to play a role in a constant pattern of low-level violence against individuals designed to increase sectarian and ethnic tension. It is unclear whether Sunni groups have ever used Iraqi forces uniforms or deliberately acted as if they were Shi'ites in attacking Sunnis, but they have been repeatedly accused of such tactics. It is clear that they have killed, intimidated, and blackmailed Shi'ites, Kurds, and progovernment individuals at a wide range of levels in an effort to drive them out of Sunni areas and create a constant climate of low-level violence designed to provoke a violent Shi'ite and Kurdish reaction.

  The use of these tactics increased after the February 22, 2006 Askariya shrine bombing. Masked gunmen or groups wearing MOI uniforms often targeted individuals in their homes or businesses. Sometimes the individuals were kidnapped and a ransom demanded, but more often they were gunned down on the spot or turned up later in one of the many "body dumps" tortured and executed. In most cases involving the kidnapped of children, the victims were released after the ransom was paid.[41] Although Shi'ite militias both within and outside the Iraqi security forces (ISF) were to blame, surely Sunni insurgents and criminal groups conducted their own retaliatory strikes. Some of typical events included the following:

  - March 26, 2006: Masked gunmen kidnap 16 employees of the Saaeed Import and Export Company in Baghdad.
  - March 29, 2006: Gunmen in Iraqi commando uniforms round up 14 members of an electrical supply shop in Baghdad and riddle them with machine-gun fire, killing 8 people and wounding 6.
  - March 30, 2006: In Ramadi, three workers from the local hospital are found blindfolded and shot.
  - March 31, 2006: Twenty-four bodies of young men handcuffed and showing signs of torture are found in Amiriyah.
  - April 1, 2006: Gunmen attack a minibus carrying Shi'ites northeast of Baghdad, killing six men and wounding one woman.
  - April 15, 2006: Gunmen wearing MOI commando uniforms and driving their standard issued trucks open fire on guards outside of the Iraqna cellular phone company, wounding one guard whom they then abduct.
  - April 16, 2006: Gunmen abduct 30 workers at a trading company.

- April 20, 2006: Gunmen in six pickup trucks storm two bookstores in Baghdad, kidnapping six people. They are found six days later dead and all shot in the right eye.
- May 17, 2006: Fifteen members of the Iraqi Olympic Tae Kwon Do team are kidnapped between Fallujah and Ramadi as they were returning from training in Jordan.
- May 31, 2006: A member of the local council in Adhamiya says that 18 Sunni men from the area had disappeared after leaving in two vehicles to give blood in response to a bomb attack outside a local Sunni mosque.
- June 5, 2006: In the morning, less than a mile from the Green Zone in a commercial district, about 50 masked-men wearing Interior police uniforms and driving ministry vehicles cordon off the street and abduct as many as 50 people, forcing them into the backs of trucks at gunpoint, tying some, and blindfolding others. Witnesses said that there seemed to be no discretion as to who was rounded up and that the operation took less than 20 minutes.
- June 18, 2006: Gunman capture ten Shi'ite bakery workers from the workplace in a Shi'a neighborhood in Baghdad.[42]
- June 21, 2006: In the town of Taji, north of Baghdad, gunmen ambush dozens of factory workers in one of the largest mass kidnappings of the Iraq War. Interior Ministry officials say that as many as 125 people were abducted, as gunmen seize three buses carrying workers leaving a factory, located in the largely Sunni area of Taji and owned by the Industry Ministry.
- July 15, 2006: Gunmen in MOI uniforms kidnap Ammar Jabbar Al-Saadi, head of Iraq's Olympic Committee, as well as the deputy head of the Olympic Committee, the chairman of the Tae-kwon-do Federation, and the chief of the Boxing Federation Union.
- July 31, 2006: Gunmen kidnap 26 in Arasat, a shopping street in Baghdad, including the head of the Iraqi-American Chamber of Commerce.

  UNAMI reported in the July–August Human Rights Report that many kidnapping victims simply disappeared and their families had no information on their locations. Many families received threatening letters telling them to leave their homes and possessions behind. In many some cases, it appeared that militia groups moved into the abandoned homes.
- August 1, 2006: Gunmen kidnap 45 civilians from Al-Najaf.
- August 6, 2006: While traveling by bus, eight workers for the Nasir Company, part of the Ministry of Industry, are kidnapped.
- During the month of August, 25 truck drivers and their vehicles disappear along the same road from the Syrian border toward Baghdad.
- September 2, 2006: Ghanim Ghudayer, 22, considered one of the best soccer players in Baghdad's Air Force Club, is abducted by unknown assailants, some who are wearing military uniforms.
- October 1, 2006: Gunmen kidnap 26 workers from a refrigerated food factory in western Baghdad. The kidnapped workers include Shi'ites and Sunnis and three women. Police found ten of the bodies dumped in Baghdad the following day.

- October 2, 2006: Gunmen kidnap 14 workers from Baghdad's technical university. The gunmen wear police-style uniforms and force the victims into vehicles at gunpoint.
- October 31, 2006: Gunmen at a makeshift checkpoint north of Baghdad in Salahaddin Province kidnap 40 people on minibuses.
- November 2, 2006: Gunmen kidnap a basketball coach of Iraq's foremost team and a blind coach of an Iraqi blind team. Both men are Sunnis.
- November 11, 2006: Gunmen stop three minibuses carrying Shi'ites in the town of Latifiya south of Baghdad, kill 9 passengers, and kidnap 13 others.
- November 12, 2006: Gunmen kidnap ten people in the town of Efeg.
- November 14, 2006: The largest mass kidnapping occurs since the U.S.–led invasion in 2003. Between 100 and 150 employees and visitors at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Scholarships and Cultural Relations Directorate in the downtown Karradah district are kidnapped by about 80 gunmen. The Ministry was responsible for granting scholarships to professors and students wishing to study abroad. Witnesses said that the gunmen were dressed in police uniforms and cordoned off the street before they passed by four guards. The operation only took 15 minutes; the kidnappers locked the woman into one room in the building and then separated out the males into Sunni and Shi'ites. But the Higher Education Minister said that both Sunnis and Shi'ites were kidnapped. He also announced that classes at universities would be suspended until further notice to protect professors and students.[43] During the night, Iraqi police managed to free most of the captives, but some were still missing. Also on November 14, gunmen abduct 12 workers at a brick factory in a town near Diwaniya.
- December 17, 2006: Gunmen in police uniforms kidnap dozens of people at a Red Crescent office in Baghdad. Police said 10 to 20 people are seized. Antonella Notari, spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva, said at least 25 people had been taken by gunmen from among staff and visitors. The kidnappers released 17 people the following day.
- December 21, 2006: Iraq's Olympic cycling coach is killed after gunmen kidnap him from his home.
- December 26, 2006: Gunmen kidnap Muhanad Ahmed Saleh, director of the Baghdad International Fair, on his way to work in Amiriya district in western Baghdad.

These tactics continued in 2007, in both Baghdad and the ring of cities around it. Some of these attacks in 2007 include the following:

- February 6, 2007: Gunmen in four cars kidnap 11 people from one house in the Shi'ite district of Sadr City.
- March 28, 2007: Shi'ite gunmen storm a Sunni district in Tal Afar, killing 50 and kidnapping at least 40 people.
- April 1, 2007: Gunmen kidnap 19 civilians after stopping cars at a fake checkpoint near the city of Baquba.
- April 7, 2007: Gunmen kidnap ten people who are traveling in a minivan near Himreen.

- April 29, 2007: Gunmen set fire to 15 fuel trucks and kidnap their drivers on a main road near the city of Samarra.
- May 14, 2007: Gunmen kidnap three civilians at a fake checkpoint near the town of Ishaqi.
- June 20, 2007: Gunmen kidnap eight Christian university students and a lecturer in Mosul.
- June 24, 2007: Gunmen at a fake checkpoint kidnap a member of the Yathrib City Council east of Balad.

- **Use threats and terror tactics to cause sectarian displacement:** Both Sunni insurgents and Shi'ite militias used threats and terror tactics after the February 22 bombing to drive either Shi'ite or Sunni families out of mixed neighborhoods in order to make one sect predominate. This tactic became one of the principal methods of soft sectarian cleansing.

  Sectarian cleansing often began with intimidation and threats. Leaflets were frequently distributed by gunmen or even by children. In some instances, those who had fled did so after hearing their names on a list of "enemies" read out at a Sunni mosque. It was also reported that "religious vigilantes" would paint black crosses, referred to as "the mark of death," on the doors of those it sought to drive out. Young children were sometimes abducted for several hours and then returned to their families with a warning that if they did not leave, next time their children would be killed.[44]

  By mid-April, the Ministry of Displacement Migration put the number at 60,000 people.[45] A spokesman for the ministry estimated that every day 1,000 Iraqis are being forced to flee their homes.[46] Much of the displacement occurred in and around the capital, traditionally a mixed city.

  Between March 22 and April 15 the number of displaced Iraqis tripled from 23,000 to almost 70,000 people. By April 19, the total number of Iraqis displaced from sectarian violence was estimated to be 80,000 by the President of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, Said Hakki. This included over 7,000 Shi'ite families and about 2,800 Sunni families.[47] This total steadily climbed and by mid-May, Iraqi immigration officials said that between 90,000 and 100,000 individuals had been displaced, or 15,000 families.[48]

  It was far from clear how methodical these targeted secular evictions were. Because they were perpetrated by a combination of gangs, insurgents, and militias, and targeted both Sunnis and Shi'ites, it seemed unlikely that a concerted effort by a single or even a few organizations was at work. However, Mr. Hakki noted that in most cases, the threats were coming from groups based outside of the neighborhoods. "They are highly organized," he said, "It is not happening in a haphazard way."[49] However, the story told by one auto-parts storeowner in Baghdad was perhaps more illustrative of the way Iraqis view the violence. Once a month gunmen came to his business to collect $300 in "protection money." "They say they're with the insurgency and that they're protecting me from worse things. Who knows the truth . . . I just pay. We all pay."[50]

  According to a memo attributed to al-Qa'ida in May 2006, it appeared that the displacement of Shi'ites was a new element of the terrorist organization's strategy in Iraq. The memo, found in an al-Qa'ida "hideout" in Yousifiya by U.S. forces, calls on followers to "displace the Shi'ites and displace their shops and businesses from our areas."[51]

The situation only deteriorated into the summer. The Ministry of Migration put the official number of refugees at 162,000, or roughly 27,000 families, since the Samarra mosque bombing. The Ministry reported that some 30,000 more people had registered as refugees in July. The dramatic increase forced the Ministry to build more temporary encampments, including one in the southern Shiite city of Diwaniya, where 10,000 refugees arrived in only a few weeks. One man who lived just south of Baghdad recollected his last moments at home: "Gunmen told us to leave or they would kill us." The increase clearly stemmed from continued sectarian violence and revenge killings since the mosque bombing in February 2006.[52]

According to the July–August 2006 Human Rights update by UNAMI, 300,000 Iraqis were displaced following the February 22 Samarra mosque bombing. The majority of the displaced appeared to flow from Baghdad, but almost all of the governorates were affected. The Kurdistan Regional Government reported that 50,000 refugees arrived in the northern region of Kurdistan during the six-month period.[53] The September–October Human Rights update increased the number of displaced to 400,000.

On December 10, 2006 Shi'ite militias attacked Sunni homes in Baghdad's Hurriya district, Interior Ministry officials and witnesses said. More than 30 families fled after the militias torched homes and killed at least one person.

According to the UN, there were 1.7 million internally displaced Iraqis at the end of 2006 with an average displacement of 40,000–50,000 a month, and 1.8 million living outside Iraq. The International Organization for Migration estimated that there were 41,189 newly displaced families in 2006.

These displacements continued into 2007. At the start of the new security plan for Baghdad in February 2007, some Iraqi leaders announced that people were beginning to return to their homes, but it was clear that this figure was small compared to the scale of the problem and that security conditions continued to deter more internally displaced persons (IDPs) from returning to their homes.

- **Exploit Arab satellite television as well as traditional media:** Islamist movements and other insurgents learned how to capture maximum exposure in regional media, use the Internet, and above all, exploit the new Arab satellite news channels. Insurgents and terrorists also paid close attention to media reactions and tailored their attacks to high-profile targets that make such attacks "weapons of mass media." Al-Qa'ida repeatedly demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the role the media plays in advancing or weakening its organization. Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qa'ida's No. 2 man, described the conflict as taking place "in the battlefield of the media" and has admitted that the organization is engaged "in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of [Muslims]" with the West.[54]

  Al-Zarqawi's al-Qa'ida in Iraq group took its attempted manipulation of the news media to new heights in June 2005. In an Internet statement, the organization severely criticized the Al Jazeera satellite television station for what it called impartial reporting. It claimed that Al Jazeera, long criticized by U.S. officials, had "sided" with the United States over Iraq.

  There was some evidence to suggest that the jihadists were losing the media battle. Al-Zarqawi issued "retractions" or "clarifications" after unpopular attacks or statements. After his declaration of "total war" on Shi'ites in the summer of 2005 received a very cool response from the larger jihadist community, al-Zarqawi issued a partial retraction. Al-Zarqawi responded in a similar way after the November 9 bombings in Amman.

The backlash from the Muslim world, especially within Jordan itself, was enough to prompt al-Zarqawi to issue several statements denying Jordanians had been the targets of the attacks. Such statements and retractions suggested al-Zarqawi was on the defensive and that his group was growing increasingly vulnerable to Muslim public opinion.

In some instances insurgents began to attack the media directly. On July 14, 2005, gunmen attacked a television crew in Baghdad, wounding three men. In October 2005, unknown gunmen attacked a broadcasting and television compound in Mosul in October.[55]

With the growth of sectarian conflict in 2006, Shi'ite militias also attacked Sunni-run media stations. On October 12, 2006, gunmen stormed the offices of Shaabiya, an Iraqi satellite channel in Baghdad. The assailants raided the building, killing seven guards and employees.[56]

After al-Zarqawi's death in June 2006, his successor, Abu Ayub al-Masri, began using the media to al-Qa'ida in Iraq's advantage. He did not broadcast attacks against Shi'a like his predecessor, but did continue to tape attacks against Coalition troops. He also used media to try and unite the various Sunni insurgents under the umbrella Mujahedeen Council and the "Islamic State of Iraq."

The Internet, TV, and cell phones made it much easier for insurgents to disseminate their propaganda against Coalition forces. Most large-scale attacks were filmed by sophisticated technology and insurgents edited the tapes to confirm hostile stereotypes about U.S. forces. The U.S. military response, however, stuck to traditional propaganda channels such as press releases, which were outdated and not viewed by many Iraqis.

Numerous Web sites appeared from extremist movements and terrorist groups that publicized the actions of such groups or made false or exaggerated claims. Dissemination of video, pictures, and accounts of insurgent attacks were part of an effort by the various groups to promote the image of a "chaotic" environment in Iraq in which the Iraqi government could not maintain order and stability and Coalition forces were suffering tactical losses. According to a report by the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, "the insurgent videos have grown complex and sophisticated, with detailed graphics, English subtitles, English narrators [and] Jihadist humor."[57] Iraqi terrorist and insurgent organizations learned the media and analysts regularly monitored such sites and they furnished a low-cost source of publicity. According to one report, the number of Iraqi insurgent Web sites increased from 145 to 825 between January and December 2005.[58] At the same time, the flood of Web-site activity makes it difficult to know when sites are being used for communications. Terrorist and insurgent organizations from all over the world have established the equivalent of an informal tactical net in which they exchange techniques for carrying out attacks, technical data on weapons, etc.

Insurgent videos of attacks were, however, sometimes useful to the Coalition as well. The intelligence division of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command incorporated them as an instructive tool and analyzed them for a way to avoid casualties.[59] However, there was no indication of whether this addition to the training had any measurable effect on reducing Coalition vulnerability to attack, or making soldiers more adept at avoiding roadside bombs.

Shi'ite militias began to make systematic use of the Internet as a tactic in 2006. Reprisal killings between Sunni and Shi'ite militias during the summer of 2006 became the primary cause of death in Iraq. By October 2006, Shi'ite death squads began

posting their execution lists on Web sites. *Newsweek* reported that at least eight Web sites existed with execution information on targets' occupations and addresses. Sunni death squads in the capital followed suit. The Sunni sites provided information about which police units and government agencies were infiltrated by militias.[60] Operation Together Forward II was having enough trouble curtailing sectarian violence on the ground in the fall of 2006, let alone in cyberspace.

- **Use the media to target and develop the equivalent of swarming techniques:** Iraqi terrorist and insurgent organizations learned that media reporting on the results of their attacks provided a powerful indicator of their success and what kind of attack to strike at in the future. While many attacks were planned long in advance or used "targeting" based on infiltration and simple observation, others were linked to media reporting on events, movements, etc. The end result was that insurgents could "swarm" around given types of targets, striking at vulnerable points where the target and method of attack were known to have success.
- **Maintain a strategy of constant attrition, but strike hard according to a calendar of turning points and/or at targets with high political, social, and economic impact:** Insurgents and Islamists learned the importance of a constant low-level body count and the creation of a steady climate of violence. This forced the United States into a constant, large-scale security effort, made it difficult for Iraqi forces to take hold, put constant pressure on U.S. and Iraqi forces to disperse, and ensured constant media coverage.

  At the same time, insurgents and Islamists showed a steadily more sophisticated capability to exploit holidays, elections, and other political events, and sensitive targets both inside the country that are the scene of their primary operations and in the United States and the West. Attacks on Kurdish and Shi'ite religious festivals are cases in point.

  So was an attack on Abu Ghraib prison, the site of many media reports on the abuse of Iraqi prisoners on April 2, 2005. The prison still held some 3,446 detainees and the insurgent attack was conducted by 40–60 insurgents, lasted nearly 40 minutes, and was large and well organized enough to wound 20 U.S. troops.[61]

  After the third anniversary since the beginning of the war in Iraq, President Bush made several speeches in which he referred to the city of Tal Afar as a success story and "a free city that gives reason for hope for a free Iraq." Several days later, 40 Iraqis were killed and 30 were wounded when a suicide bomber penetrated an Iraqi Army recruiting office near a U.S.–Iraqi military base.[62]
- **Push "hot buttons": Try to find forms of attack that provoke disproportionate fear and "terror" to force the U.S. and Iraqi forces into costly, drastic, and sometimes provocative responses:** Terrorists and insurgents found that attacks planned for maximum political and psychological effects often had the additional benefit of provoking overreaction.

  One example of such attacks that put constant pressure on Americans, demonstrated insurgent "strength," and got high-profile media attention was the long series of attacks on the secure areas in the "Green Zone" in Baghdad and along the road from that zone to the Baghdad airport.

  Attacking the airport road was an almost perfect way of keeping up constant psychological and political pressure. It passed through a hostile Sunni area, was almost impossible to secure from IEDs, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), rocket

and mortar attacks, and sniping without pinning down large numbers of troops. This helps explain why there were well over 100 attacks on targets moving along the road during January 30 through May 4, 2005.[63]

- **Game Regional, Western, and other outside media:** Use interview access, tapes, journalist hostage takings and killings, politically led and motivated crowds, drivers and assistants to journalists, and timed and targeted attacks to attempt to manipulate Western and outside media. Manipulate U.S. official briefings with planted questions.
- **Use Americans and other foreigners as proxies:** There is nothing new about using Americans and other foreigners as proxies for local regimes, or attacking them to win support for ideological positions and causes. There was, however, steadily growing sophistication in the timing and nature of such attacks, and in exploiting softer targets such as American businessmen in the country of operations, in striking at U.S. and allied targets in other countries, or in striking at targets in the United States. It was also clear that such attacks received maximum political and media attention in the United States.
- **Attack UN, NGO, embassies, aid personnel, and foreign contractor business operations:** Attacking such targets greatly reduced the ability to carry out nation-building and stability operations to win hearts and minds. Attacking the "innocent" and curtailing their operations or driving organizations out of the country became an important focus of insurgents and Islamist extremist attacks. Iraqi insurgents had pursued this tactic since the first days of the insurgency.

  In November of 2005, al-Qa'ida divulged new details about the April 19, 2003, bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, one of the first major attacks of the Iraqi insurgency and the first to intentionally target foreigners. The 2003 bombing killed 23 people, including the head of the UN mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Iraqi coordinator for the UN children's fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers, and injured more than 150. In a statement posted on an Islamic radical Web site, al-Qa'ida said the attack had been planned by Thamir Mubarak Atrouz, a Sunni Arab from the town of Khaldiyah in Anbar Province. Atrouz, a former officer in Saddam Hussein's army, had fled to Saudi Arabia but returned to Iraq before the U.S.–led invasion of Iraq began in March 2003 in order to fight Americans. He was killed by U.S. forces in Fallujah in April 2004.[64] The 2003 bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad, although the most famous attack on diplomatic offices in Baghdad, was hardly the only such incident since the insurgency began, however. Insurgents also periodically fired mortars against U.S. facilities inside the Green Zone.

  Insurgents stepped up their attacks against foreign diplomats in the summer and fall of 2005. In July, al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia killed two Algerian diplomats and one Egyptian. The group also attempted to kidnap Bahraini and Pakistani Embassy staff, though the former escaped with light wounds and the latter was unharmed. Insurgent attacks against diplomats in the fall and winter of 2005 included the following:

  - October 10, 2005: Gunmen ambush a convoy of Arab League diplomats in Baghdad, wounding two Iraqi policemen.
  - October 20, 2005: Two Moroccan Embassy employees are kidnapped on the highway from Amman to Baghdad. On November 3, al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia posts a statement on a Web site saying Abdelkrim el-Mohsfidi, a Moroccan diplomat, and Abderrahim Boualem, his driver, will be executed. The group says the

executions are meant as "an example for others who are still thinking to challenge the Mujahideen and dare to come to the land of the two rivers."

- November 7, 2005: A Sudanese diplomat, Taha Mohammed Ahmed, is hit by a stray bullet while walking in the garden of the Sudanese Embassy in Baghdad.
- November 9, 2005: Hammouda Ahmed Adam, a Sudanese Embassy employee, is killed by unknown gunmen while driving in the Mansour district of Baghdad.
- November 12, 2005: Insurgents attack the Omani Embassy in Baghdad, killing an Iraqi police officer and an embassy employee.
- November 20, 2005: The U.S. military announces it has arrested five terrorists suspected of plotting to attack the Italian Embassy in Baghdad.
- December 23, 2005: Gunmen kidnap a Sudanese diplomat and five other men as they leave a mosque in Baghdad.

As is evident from the examples listed above, insurgents repeatedly singled out envoys from Arab and Muslim countries in their attacks. Al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia's strategy appeared to be aimed at driving representatives of these countries from Iraq in order to weaken the new Iraqi government and to divide U.S. allies.

In a statement released on November 3, the organization called on diplomats in Baghdad to "pack their bags and leave" or face certain death.[65] The statement, signed by the military wing of al-Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers, read: "We are renewing our threat to those so-called diplomatic missions who have insisted on staying in Baghdad and have not yet realized the repercussions of such a challenge to the will of the Mujahideen."[66]

Al-Qa'ida's strategy had some success. The Philippine Embassy in Baghdad relocated its staff to Jordan after the July 2005 attacks on Algerian and Egyptian diplomats. The previous summer, the Philippine government granted insurgents' demands and withdrew its peacekeeping contingent from Iraq in order to secure the safe release of a Filipino hostage. The kidnapping of Angelo de la Cruz in July 2004 led Manila to issue a ban on its citizens working in Iraq. The government reissued the ban in November 2005, after two Filipino contract workers were killed in Iraq.[67]

On December 23, 2005, gunmen kidnapped six Sudanese nationals, including five embassy employees. The men were captured while leaving a mosque in Baghdad. Abdel Monem al-Huri, the embassy's second secretary, was among the hostages. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq claimed responsibility in an Internet statement on December 29 and demanded that Khartoum break off all diplomatic relations with Iraq immediately. The Sudanese government closed its embassy in Baghdad and withdrew its diplomats the following day. On December 31, insurgents released the five Sudanese diplomats.[68]

These attacks limited the ability of the elected government to establish international legitimacy and credibility. Governments whose personnel suffer an attack may not have the will to continue to pursue relations in the face of domestic discontent over any casualties and the Iraq War in general, as was the case with the Philippines. Such attacks made the Iraqi government look powerless.

While there were as many as 40 diplomatic missions in Iraq as of late 2005, several countries were hesitant to send ambassadors to Baghdad. At least two of Iraq's neighbors, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, postponed doing so until the security situation in the country improved.[69]

Kidnappings and killings of foreign personnel continued into 2006 and 2007:

- January 18, 2006: Police said gunmen killed ten security guards and seize an African engineer in an ambush in Baghdad.
- January 21, 2006: British security company contractor Stephen Enwright, 30, is killed in a roadside bomb in Iraq.
- January 24, 2006: Two German engineers are kidnapped from their homes by insurgents who gained access to the compound by pretending to be police.
- February 20, 2006: Two Macedonian contractors are released in the southern city of Basra after being kidnapped on Thursday.
- March 10, 2006: An American who was among four kidnapped activists from a Chicago-based Christian group is killed in Iraq.
- March 23, 2006: A joint U.S.–British operation freed three Christian peace activists northeast of Baghdad.
- April 4, 2006: A receptionist at the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Embassy and a friend are killed as they leave the building.
- May 2, 2006: Two German hostages are freed after being held by their captors for more than three months.
- May 16, 2006: A UAE diplomat is abducted in the Mansour district of Baghdad after gunmen shoot his Sudanese bodyguard.
- June 3, 2006: In Baghdad, a Russian diplomat is killed and four diplomatic employees are kidnapped.
- June 25, 2006: Gunmen execute four Russian Embassy workers held hostage since June 3, 2006.
- September 19, 2006: In Basra, at the Iranian Consulate, one rocket hits the building, another strikes a car parked outside, a third hits the compound wall, and a fourth falls in the garden.
- September 24, 2006: Assailants in four cars pull up outside the UAE Embassy in Baghdad and fire a rocket-propelled grenade at it, but no one is injured.
- February 4, 2007: Gunmen in Iraqi Army uniforms kidnap a senior Iranian diplomat in Baghdad.
- February 11, 2007: Two Germans are missing in Iraq and are suspected of being kidnapped.
- May 29, 2007: Five British contractors are abducted from a municipal building in Sadr City, Baghdad.

- **Kidnap, kill, and/or intimidate women and cadres of foreign workers:** Killing and kidnapping women, particularly those working in NGOs and aid projects got great media attention and led some organizations to leave the country. Kidnapping or killing groups of foreign workers put political pressure on their governments, got high local and regional media attention, and sometimes led governments to stop their workers from going to Iraq.

  Counts of kidnappings in Iraq, and analyses of responsibility, were necessarily uncertain and sharply undercounted the number of kidnappings of Iraqis—many of which were never reported. An analysis of kidnappings from April 1, 2004, to January

31, 2005, showed, however, that there were 264 foreign civilian kidnappings. Some 47 were killed, 56 remained missing, 150 were released, 5 escaped, and a total of 6 were rescued. Given the fact there were some 100,000 expatriates in Iraq at the time, this meant a roughly 1 in 380 chance of being kidnapped, and roughly 20 percent of the foreigners kidnapped were killed or beheaded.[70]

In November 2005, the *New York Times* reported that of the more than 200 foreigners who had been abducted since the start of the war, several dozen had been killed and at least 20 were still missing. When U.S. troops entered Fallujah in November 2004, they discovered bunkers where captives had been held and tortured. After Fallujah, however, the number of foreign kidnappings dropped significantly.[71] Another estimate of foreigners kidnapped in Iraq placed the total at 268 at the end of January 2006. Of those, 44 were killed, 135 were released, 3 escaped, 3 were rescued, and the status of 81 were unknown.[72]

The kidnapping of foreigners by insurgents returned in the fall of 2005. In late October, two Moroccans were kidnapped by insurgents and held hostage. The following month, four aid workers, two Canadians, a Briton, and an American, were also kidnapped. A group calling itself "Swords of Truth" issued a claim of responsibility, saying the four were "spies of the occupying forces."[73] Also in November, two Filipino contract workers were killed in a bombing of their convoy and a German archaeologist was kidnapped.

On December 5, gunmen abducted a French engineer in Baghdad. Less than a week later, on December 9, insurgents kidnapped and killed an Egyptian engineer in Tikrit.[74] Camille Nassif Tannus, a Lebanese engineer, was kidnapped on December 29, but was released three days later.[75] According to the Lebanese government, some 50 Lebanese working for private firms have been kidnapped since the 2003 U.S.–led invasion of Iraq. While most were released after the payment of ransoms, at least five were killed by their captors.[76]

In January, Jill Carroll, a reporter for the *Christian Science Monitor,* was kidnapped on her way to an interview with a Sunni politician. Several days later a tape by her captors aired on al-Jazeera demanding the release of Iraqi women prisoners; they threatened to kill Ms. Carroll if their demands were not met in 72 hours. Although the United States indicated that it was planning to release these prisoners, it denied that the action had any relation to the insurgents' demands. Despite this, subsequent tapes were aired by Carroll's captors, again, calling for the release of all Iraqi women in custody. Two German engineers were also kidnapped from their homes during the same month.

- **Expand the fighting outside Iraq:** In an interview with ABC News in mid-November 2005, Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr said he believed al-Zarqawi might be planning out-of-area operations. Jabr said his ministry had uncovered information that al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia was planning at least two other attacks—one in Yemen and the other in Egypt—against foreigners and Americans. Jabr also claimed that foreigners had been recruited to come to Iraq in order to receive training so that they could return to their home countries to carry out attacks. A few days later, U.S. Army Maj. Gen. William Webster, whose 3rd Infantry Division was responsible for security in Baghdad, said he believed it was "a distinct possibility" that insurgents were training in Iraq for attacks in other countries.[77]

  It was not clear exactly when al-Zarqawi and other insurgents began to consider attacking targets outside Iraq, or when actual attempts began. Al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian,

began to attack targets in Jordan long before he went to Iraq. In late 1999, he organized attacks on the Radisson SAS hotel in Amman and Jewish and Christian religious targets. In October 2002, his followers killed Laurence Foley, as U.S. diplomat assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Amman. He seems to have played a role in the bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad in August 2003.

There are some indications that al-Zarqawi's group began planning and attempting such attacks in late 2003. Jordan reported that a Zarqawi agent named Azmi al-Jayousi led a cell that attempted to carry out a massive explosive and chemical attack on the U.S. Embassy, the headquarters of the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, the office of the prime minister, and other targets in Amman in mid-April 2004.

Some sources say Jordan disrupted further attack attempts after that time, including a rocket attack on a U.S. warship in Aqaba earlier in 2005. One senior Jordanian source claimed that Jordan had foiled two attacks in 2003, eight in 2004, and ten in 2005.[78]

Al-Zarqawi was the first major insurgent leader to openly threaten to expand the fighting to foreign countries, although his open statements began to get serious publicity only in the summer of 2005. Jordanian intelligence reported that it had intercepted signals that al-Zarqawi had ordered some of his fighters to leave Iraq to carry out attacks in other Arab and Islamic countries in October 2005.

Some experts believed the July 23, 2005, Sharm el-Sheik bombings signaled the expansion of al-Zarqawi's network beyond Iraq. But the bombings at the Red Sea resort, which killed at least 88 and wounded more than 150, appeared to have been the work of Egyptian radical Islamists. Three groups—the "Abdullah Azzam Brigades," "Tawhid and Jihad Group in Egypt," and the "Holy Warriors of Egypt"—claimed responsibility for the bombings. Although all three were believed to have ties to al-Qa'ida, there was no evidence to suggest al-Zarqawi was directly involved in the attack.

On November 9, 2005, al-Zarqawi's operation in Iraq carried out three suicide bombings of U.S.–owned hotels in Amman. The attackers specifically targeted Jordanians—including a large wedding party—and killed at least 60 people from some six different countries and wounded more than 100. Only a few Americans were killed or hurt in the attacks on the Radisson, the Grand Hyatt, and the Days Inn. The casualties also included four Palestinian officials, one of which was Lt. Gen. Bashir Nafe, the head of West Bank security.

- **Kidnap, kill, and/or intimidate professionals, Iraqi media, and intelligentsia, and conduct "mystery killings":** Steady killing and intimidation of individual professionals, media figures, and intelligentsia in threatened areas offered a series of soft targets that could not be defended, but where a cumulative pattern of killing and intimidation made governance difficult, created major problems for security and police forces, weakened the economy, and exacerbated the general feeling of insecurity to the point where people lost faith in the Iraqi government, the Coalition, and the political process. According to the head of Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, Shihab al-Tamimi, kidnappings and assassinations targeting Iraqi journalists surged in the weeks leading up to the January 30 election.[79]

  The U.S. Department of State Report on Human Rights for 2004 stated that the Ministry of Human Rights claimed that at least 80 professors and 50 physicians were assassinated during 2004. Reporters Without Borders noted that 31 journalists and media assistants were killed during the year. Universities also suffered from a wave of kidnappings. Researchers, professors, administrators, and students were all victims,

including some who disappeared without a trace.[80] According to the Iraqi newspaper *Al-Mashriq,* more than 3,000 Iraqi doctors left the country in order to save their lives since the start of the insurgency.[81]

In late September 2005 Sunni insurgents dressed as Iraqi police officers stormed the Jazeera primary school in Muwelha, a Sunni suburb of Iskandariya, killing five teachers and their driver.[82] The attack raised fears among many Iraqis that insurgents would begin to target Iraqi schools. A few days later, on September 29, gunmen opened fire on a minibus transporting teachers in the Al-Mansuriyah district of Baquba, killing one and wounding several.[83]

On October 9, gunmen entered a school in Samarra and executed a teacher in front of students and other teachers.[84] In all of the incidents, the teachers were Shi'ites, leaving many to believe that the attacks were motivated by sectarian violence rather than insurgent hostility toward their profession. A number of schools, many in Shi'ite neighborhoods, responded to the wave of attacks by erecting security barriers and hiring guards.[85] On October 20, a mortar hit a public school in the al-Mansour neighborhood of Baghdad, killing one student and wounding four others.[86] Attacks on schools, however, were still relatively rare. University professors also became popular targets for insurgents. In a five-day period in late November 2005 five university professors were killed, three of them in the greater Baghdad area.[87] In March 2005, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research said that 89 university professors had been killed since 2003. Three hundred eleven teachers were allegedly murdered between December 2005 and March 2006. Academics themselves estimated that up to 105 of their colleagues had been assassinated.[88] The Ministry of Health reported that between April 2003 and May 31, 2006, 102 doctors were killed, 164 nurses were killed, and 142 nonmedical staff were killed. Some estimates place the number of kidnapped Iraqi doctors as high as 250 in the past two years.[89]

This environment of intimidation and violence compelled many academics to flee the country. In late June 2006, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) estimated that more than 40 percent of Iraq's professional class had left the country since 2003. According to the Committee, 350,000 left for Syria, 450,000 went to Jordan, and 90,000 moved to other parts of the world.[90]

Attacks on Iraqi professionals and intelligentsia seemed to increase in 2006. In May 2006, for example, 8 doctors were killed and another 42 were wounded, according to Ministry of Health records. The Ministry of Health in the Kurdish Regional Government reported that at least 53 doctors had relocated to the safer Kurdish region since January 2006.[91] Although like much of the violence, the motive was difficult to discern, and criminal violence, the insurgency, and tit-for-tat sectarian attacks all probably played a role in the deaths:

- March 6, 2006: Gunmen kidnap a prominent university professor, Ali Hussein Khafaji, dean of the Engineering College at Mustansiriya University.
- March 30, 2006: A lawyer is shot dead in Baghdad. In Ramadi, three workers from the local hospital are found blindfolded and shot. Al-Qa'ida reportedly claimed responsibility for the deaths, and a note left at the scene accuses the men of being homosexuals.
- April 5, 2006: An architect is shot and killed while getting a haircut. A school supervisor is killed in a drive-by shooting.

- April 17, 2006: Gunmen kidnap a doctor and six electrical engineers in two separate incidents.
- April 19, 2006: Three university professors traveling to Baghdad are killed by gunmen.
- May 2, 2006: Alleged members of the Ministry of Interior arrest and kill Mohammed Abdul-Raheem Al-Ani, a professor at Al-Mustansiriya University, a doctoral student in the College of Islamic Sciences of Baghdad University, and a member of the Muslim Scholars Association.[92]
- May 12, 2006: In Baquba, a Shi'a professor, Widad Al-Shimri, and her daughter are killed.[93]
- May 15, 2006: Near the town of Baladruz, four teachers are killed on the way to their school.[94]
- May 15, 2006: In Mosul, gunman assassinate Dr. Adnan Abbas Al-Hashemy in the garage near his private clinic.[95]
- June 5, 2006: Two college students are killed by gunmen in Baghdad's southern Dora district. Other reports indicate that as many as 12 students are killed and that the gunmen had posed as bus drivers, inviting the students onto their buses.
- June 10, 2006: A Sunni Arab professor at the College of Chemistry in the University of Basra, Mr. Ahmad Abdul Wadir Abdullah, is killed.[96]
- June 13, 2006: Gunmen kill Hani Aref Jassim, a professor at Baghdad University's College of Engineering, in Baghdad's Mansour neighborhood.
- June 15, 2006: Professor Qasim Yousif Yacoub at the University of Basra is killed.
- June 18, 2006: At the Ministry of Interior building in Baghdad, Modhaer Zayed Al-Dabagh, a professor at the Computer College of Mosul University, is killed.
- June 21, 2006: Gunmen kill the dean of the Abdullah Bin Om Kalthoum School in Al-Zubain, near Basra. According to witnesses, the dean is killed in front of his students.
- June 22, 2006: A professor at the College of Political Sciences in Baghdad University and editor of the *Al-Syada* daily newspaper, Jassim Mohammad Al-Eesawi, is killed in Al-Shu'ala City in Baghdad.[97]
- July 1, 2006: Sunni lawmaker Tayseer al-Mashhadani is abducted by kidnappers, along with seven of her bodyguards, at a checkpoint in a Shi'ite neighborhood of Baghdad.
- July 6, 2006: An investigative judge is gunned down while he is being driven through a western neighborhood. Additionally, Khalida Mohammed, a prominent doctor in the northern city of Kirkuk, is shot to death as she leaves for work.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq reported in its Human Rights update for July and August that during those two months, three judges were killed, another was kidnapped, and two others survived assassination attempts. These numbers were concerning because of the acute lack of judges during a time when thousands of detainees remained untried. The report also states that 120 lawyers had fled Iraq since January, and seven were killed in July and August.

- July 23, 2006: A car bomb explodes in front of the Appeal's Court in Kirkuk, killing one lawyer and wounding 100 other civilians.
- July 29, 2006: Unknown assassins kill Salah Abdel-Kader, a lawyer known for working on "honor crimes" and children's cases, in his office in Baghdad.
- September 26, 2006: Gunmen assassinate heart surgeon Razzaq Umran Ali as he drives to work at the Ibn al-Bitar Hospital in Baghdad.
- October 31, 2006: A Geology Professor, Issam al-Rawi, at the University of Baghdad is killed by two gunmen on motorcycles. He was a moderate Sunni Muslim; the dean of the science department said, "They murdered one of the few burning candles. We considered him a man for all."[98] Shi'ite and Sunni death squads were eliminating all moderates in an attempt to bring about full-scale civil war.
- November 3, 2006: Gunmen kill the dean of the College of Administration and Economy at the University of Baghdad. Gunmen also kill a lawyer and his two daughters in Hillah. The lawyer was advising the main Sunni charity. In another attack, masked gunmen wound the principal and three students at a primary school in southern Baghdad.
- January 23, 2007: Gunmen kill Dhiyaa al-Mugoutir, a professor at Mustansiriya University, in a drive-by shooting in the northern Adhamiya district of Baghdad.
- January 28, 2007: Three university professors and a student are kidnapped in the Khadimiya district in northern Baghdad while on their way home from a seminar at a law college.
- February 1, 2007: Gunmen break into the Physical Education College of Diyala and kill the dean, Walhan Hamed al-Rubaie, in Baquba.
- February 25, 2007: A suicide bomber kills at least 40 people and wounds 55 by detonating an explosives vest in the reception area of Mustansiriya University's Economy and Administration College in eastern Baghdad.
- April 16, 2007: Gunmen kill Talal al-Jalili, the dean of the Political Science College, in a drive-by shooting in Mosul.
- April 17, 2007: Gunmen kill a university professor in the al-Saidiya district in southern Baghdad.
- May 2, 2007: Gunmen kill Nidhal al-Asadi, a university professor, in Mosul.
- May 22, 2007: At least 4 college students are killed and 25 are wounded in a mortar attack at Ibn al-Haitham College in the Adhamiya district in northern Baghdad.

- **Attack, kidnap, and kill high-ranking members of the Iraqi security forces and their families:** This was done not only to erode efforts to build the ISF, but also to discourage and frighten potential recruits and to undermine Iraqi confidence in the government's ability to provide security. As the low-level civil war intensified in 2005 and 2006, a greater number of Iraqi soldiers and policemen were killed. The majority of Iraqi police were Shi'ite, and they became symbolic targets for insurgents.
  - August 27, 2005: Insurgents kill Lt. Col. Mohammed Salih in Kirkuk. Also in Kirkuk, gunmen kill Lt. Col. Muhammad Fakhri Abdullah.
  - August 29, 2005: Gunmen kill Brig. Gen. Numan Salman Faris, director of the rapid response team for Baghdad's Azamiyah district.

Periods of relative calm could be followed by sudden escalations. For example, in one 24-hour period in late September 2005, insurgents assassinated Colonel Fadil Mahmud Muhammad, the head of Diyala's Police Command; killed four workers from the Ministry of Displacement and Migration in Baghdad; and carried out other assassinations in Baquba, Ramadi, Latifiyah, and Mosul.[99]

- September 7, 2005: In Baghdad, insurgents attack an Interior Ministry commando patrol, killing Col. Ammar Ismail Arkan and wounding four bodyguards. In Basra, a roadside bombing kills Lt. Col. Karim Al-Zaidi.
- September 11, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen assassinate Maj. Gen. Adnan Abdul Rihman, director of police training at the Interior Ministry.
- September 22, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Col. Fadil Mahmud Muhammad, head of Diyala's Police Command and his driver.
- September 27, 2005: In Kirkuk, gunmen assassinate Maj. Fakhir Hussein, a counterterrorism police officer, and wound another officer.
- September 29, 2005: In western Baghdad, gunmen kill four policemen, including two high-ranking police officers from Balad.
- November 7, 2005: Insurgents wound police Brig.-Gen. Hamid Shafiq in an attempted assassination.
- December 4, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Iraqi Police Commander Lt. Col. Abdul-Razaak Abudl-Jabbar in western Baghdad.
- December 25, 2005: A roadside bomb kills Police Lt. Col. Fawzi Ali Uklaa in Mosul.
- December 26, 2005: In Diyala Province, gunmen abduct a Sunni police colonel.
- January 15, 2006: Col. Hussein Shiaa, commander of the 2nd Battalion of the Iraqi Army's 4th Brigade, and his brother are abducted when they were leaving their base in Mahmoudiya.
- January 17, 2006: The bodies of Col. Hussein Shiaa, commander of the 2nd Battalion of the Iraqi Army's 4th Brigade, and his brother are found dead in western Baghdad's dangerous al-Baiyaa district. A police lieutenant is gunned down in his car while driving through al-Baiyaa.
- January 21, 2006: An Iraqi army major, his son, and his bodyguard are killed in a drive-by shooting Saturday as they head to work; a second son is wounded in the attack near Qadisiyah. Police also find the bullet-riddled bodies of Iraqi commando officer Ali Hussein in an open field.
- January 25, 2006: A policeman is gunned down in Baghdad's Sadr City.
- February 13, 2006: Gunmen shoot dead an Iraqi policeman protecting electricity-generating facilities near a hospital in eastern Baghdad's Sadr City.
- February 14, 2006: Insurgents shoot dead an Iraqi Army major and his son in Taji.
- February 19, 2006: A policeman, an Iraqi Army soldier, and a paramilitary officer are killed by gunmen in three shootings.
- March 6, 2006: The car of General Dulami, a Sunni who headed the 6th Iraqi Army Division and had worked closely with American commanders, comes under a

barrage of gunfire on a highway in western Baghdad. Four bullets slam into General Dulaimi's car, and one of them pierces the armor and hits the general in the head.

- March 19, 2006: In the northern region of Kirkuk, two Iraqi soldiers are found stabbed to death two days after they were reported kidnapped.
- April 15, 2006: Lt. Col. Ali Muhammad Abdul Latif, the chief of Basra's police force, is killed by gunmen and his driver is wounded.
- May 6, 2006: A suicide bomber, dressed in an Iraqi uniform, blows himself up inside an Iraqi military base in Tikrit, killing three senior Iraqi Army officers.
- May 7, 2006: In Kirkuk, gunmen kidnap Col. Sherzad Abdullah, an Iraqi Army officer, as he leaves for work.
- May 18, 2006: In Basra, the new Police Chief, Gen. Hassan Swadi, narrowly escapes an assassination attempt when his convoy hits a roadside bomb.
- May 22, 2006: In Baghdad, gunmen shoot Brig. Gen. Nadum Hussein, who later dies at a hospital.
- May 27, 2006: In Baquba there are at least three attacks on police targets, including an ambush that kills the city's deputy police chief and four other officers.
- June 20, 2006: Gunmen assassinate the commander of the Ayan Al Tamr Police Station in western Karbala. The officer and three escorts are ambushed and killed in an unidentified area. The Iraqi Interior Ministry announces that Brig. Gen. Khudayir Abdallah Abbas, assistant commander of the Al-Fallujah Police, was also killed when leaving his house in the city.
- September 12, 2006: In Mosul, gunmen kill police Brig. Ziad Ramzi.
- September 17, 2006: In southern Basra, police find the body of Lt. Col. Fawzi Abdul Karim al-Mousawi, chief of the city's antiterrorism department. Al-Mousawi was kidnapped in front of his house by a group of armed men using two cars. He had been handcuffed and shot seven times.
- October 2, 2006: Gunmen shoot dead Col. Faris Khalil of Iraqi Intelligence as he is driving along a Baghdad highway in civilian clothes.
- October 13, 2006: A bomb planted inside a police station kills Col. Salam al-Mamoury, commander of the anti-insurgent Scorpion police force, and five other people. The blast wounds 12 others and punches a hole in the building's ceiling in central Hilla.
- November 12, 2006: A roadside bomb wounds Police Colonel Abbas al-Dulaimi, head of the U.S.–Iraqi Joint Coordination Centre in Tikrit.
- December 2, 2006: Gunmen kill Police Captain Hayder Mousa in the district of New Baghdad.
- December 7, 2006: Gunmen kill Basil Abdullah, the Deputy Chief of al-Sadoun Police Station, along with two of his guards near al- Shaab National Stadium in east-central Baghdad.
- December 10, 2006: Gunmen kill Army Col. Yaarub Khazaal, a security guard for Ahmed Chalabi, head of the de-Baathification Committee, in the western Yarmouk district of Baghdad.

- December 18, 2006: Gunmen kidnap Police Captain Nihad Khalid, head of emergency police in Samarra, after storming his house, police said.
- December 25, 2006: Gunmen kill a police lieutenant colonel and wound three other policemen in a drive-by shooting in the town of Mahaweel.
- December 28, 2006: Gunmen killed a police captain and wounded two other policemen in a drive-by shooting in Baquba.
- January 6, 2007: The Chief of Baghdad Police, Maj. Gen. Ali Yasser, survives a car bomb attack on his motorcade in Baghdad.
- February 4, 2007: Police find the body of Aqil al-Jenabi, an Army Colonel in the Iraqi Army 8th division, in an area near the city of Hilla.
- February 10, 2007: Gunmen kill Hatam Abdul-Hussein, a Colonel in Karbala police headquarters, and wound his son along with an aide in Baghdad.
- February 11, 2007: Gunmen kill Lt. Col. Jamal Mohammad, the Chief of the Serious Crimes office, in the oil refinery city of Baiji.
- February 24, 2007: A suicide car bomber kills at least five people and wounds 20 others when he blows up his vehicle at the entrance of a police station in Ramadi; the officer in charge of the station, Col. Salam al-Dulaimi, dies in the blast.
- March 15, 2007: The director of the Sadr City police station, Lt. Col. Muhammad Motashar, is killed in an attack on Sadr City's mayor; the mayor was wounded.
- March 26, 2007: Gunmen kill a police lieutenant working in the Serious Crimes Unit in Zayouna district of eastern Baghdad.
- March 29, 2007: Gunmen attack the motorcade of the head of traffic police, Jaafar al-Khafaji, in northern Baghdad, killing two traffic policemen and wounding two others.

- **Attack Iraqi Army and police recruits:** This tactic was intended to discourage and scare potential recruits. It often employed the tactics of suicide bombers targeting those waiting in line at recruiting stations or attacked new recruits at training facilities. Gunmen and insurgents also abducted potential, or rejected, recruits, their bodies later turning up executed and dumped throughout Iraq. Not only did these attacks have an important psychological value, but also the fact that they were civilians, often standing grouped together undefended, provided insurgents with a "soft" and easy target.
  - February 10, 2004: A car bomb explodes outside a police station in Iskandariya, killing at least 55 and wounding up to 65. Many of the victims were applicants lined up outside.
  - February 11, 2004: A suicide bomber rams a car packed with explosives into a crowd of Iraqi Army recruits in central Baghdad, killing at least 47 and wounding at least 50 others.
  - June 17, 2004: Suicide car bombs explode outside a military recruitment center and a city council building in Baghdad, killing at least 41 and wounding at least 142.
  - September 14, 2004: A car bomb kills 47 outside Army headquarters in Baghdad, where hundreds of recruits were lined up.

- October 23, 2004: Guerrillas dressed as police officers execute 49 newly trained Iraqi soldiers on a remote road in eastern Iraq. The unarmed soldiers stopped at a fake checkpoint while returning home after completing training with U.S. forces.
- February 8, 2005: A suicide bomb strikes Baghdad's National Guard volunteer center, killing at least 20 potential recruits.
- February 28, 2005: A suicide car bomber plows into a crowd of Iraqi Army and police recruits in Hillah, killing 127 in the single deadliest attack to date.
- April 22, 2005: Ninetenn executed Iraqi soldiers' bodies are found dumped near the oil refinery town of Beiji, north of Baghdad.
- May 30, 2005: Two suicide bombers strapped with explosives blow themselves up in a crowd of ex-policemen protesting outside of Baghdad, killing 27 in one of the deadliest attacks in a month of escalating violence. More than 100 people are wounded.
- June 8, 2005: Gunmen kidnap 22 Iraqi soldiers shortly after they leave their base near Qaim on route to Rawa.
- July 10, 2005: A suicide bomber blows himself up among a crowd of recruits at the army recruiting center at Muthana airfield in Baghdad, killing 25 and wounding 50.
- July 20, 2005: A suicide attack at the recruiting center near the Muthana airport in Baghdad kills 10, including a Sunni member of the constitutional drafting committee, and wounds more than 20.
- July 29, 2005: A suicide bicycle bomber strikes a bus carrying Iraqi Army trainees, killing two and wounding two others, outside of Balad.
- April 7, 2005: A suicide car bomb strikes a police recruitment center in Tikrit, killing five and wounding more than a dozen.
- September 28, 2005: A female suicide bomber disguised as a man kills 7 and injures 35 at a police recruitment center in Tal Afar.
- October 12, 2005: A suicide car bomber strikes a crowd of Iraqi military recruits in Tal Afar, killing at least 30 and wounding 35.
- December 6, 2005: Two suicide bombers blow themselves up at Baghdad's police academy, killing at least 43 people and wounding more than 70.
- January 2, 2006: Seven police recruits are killed and 13 are wounded by a roadside bomb outside Baquba.
- January 5, 2006: A suicide bomber targeting a police recruitment center in Ramadi kills more than 50 and wounds as many as 60 others.
- January 22, 2006: The bodies of 23 men are found partially buried near Dujail, about 50 miles north of Baghdad. They had been abducted Wednesday while traveling from Baghdad to their homes in Samarra after failing to be accepted at a police recruit center.
- January 23, 2006: The bodies of eight Sunni Arabs are found in a field north of Baghdad five days after they were seized on their way home by bus after being rejected for admission to the police academy in the capital.
- February 25, 2006: The bodies of 14 slain police commandos are found near their three burned vehicles near a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad.

- March 27, 2006: A suicide bombing at an army recruiting center in Mosul kills 40 and wounds 30.
- April 24, 2006: The bodies of 15 police recruits are found in the backs of trucks in Abu Ghraib. There are also reports that 17 more had been found in Ramadi.
- May 3, 2006: A suicide bomber blows himself up while in line with police recruits in Fallujah, killing 15 and wounding 30.
- September 1, 2006: In the Doura district in Baghdad a roadside bomb kills three police recruits.
- September 11, 2006: Sixteen Iraqi Army recruits are killed on a bus in Baghdad at the al-Muthana recruiting center and an additional seven are wounded.
- September 18, 2006: In Ramadi, the capital of Anbar Province, a suicide car bomber slams into a recruiting center, killing 13 and wounding 10 others. The insurgent group al-Qa'ida in Iraq took responsibility for the attack.
- October 4, 2006: Several mortar rounds land at an army recruitment center, killing four recruits and wounding eight others in Mosul.
- October 21, 2006: A bomb blast and an ambush by gunmen on a convoy of buses near Baquba kill 13 police recruits, and several more recruits are kidnapped. Another 25 recruits are wounded.
- October 29, 2006: Gunmen ambush a minibus carrying police translators, trainers, and cleaning workers from a police academy to Basra, killing 17 people.
- November 12, 2006: A suicide bomber walks into a police-recruiting center in Baghdad and blows himself up, killing 35 people and wounding 58.
- December 21, 2006: A suicide bomber kills 15 police officers and recruits in central Baghdad. The attacker triggers his bomb amid a crowd of cadets arriving near the Iraqi police academy off Palestine Street in the heart of Baghdad. Three police officers and 12 recruits are killed, and 15 more people wounded.
- February 10, 2007: Gunmen shoot dead eight border guard recruits when they ambush their vehicle northwest of Mosul.
- April 10, 2007: A female suicide bomber targeting police recruits outside a police station kills 17 and wounds 33, including 3 civilians, in the town of Muqdadiya.

- **Attack those involved in the trial of Saddam Hussein and other Ba'ath leaders:** This tactic was one of the first key examples of sectarian tensions and violence. On October 20, 2005, one day after the start of the trial in Baghdad, gunmen assassinated Saadon al-Janabi. Al-Janabi had been defending Awad al-Bandar, a former Ba'ath Party official. Two weeks later, on November 8, gunmen killed Adel al-Zubeidi, the lawyer for former Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan. Al-Zubeidi was riding in his car in the Sunni neighborhood of Adil in western Baghdad when insurgents sprayed the car with bullets, injuring another attorney, Thamir al-Khuzaie, in the process.

  In response to the attacks, more than 1,100 Iraqi lawyers withdrew from Saddam Hussein's defense team on November 12. The attorneys had earlier said they would not return to court until security was stepped up and reaffirmed their intention not to return to court on November 28 when the trial was scheduled to resume. In the statement they released, the attorneys said they withdrew because "there was no response from the Iraqi government, US forces and international organizations to our demands

for providing protection to the lawyers and their families."[100] Many of the lawyers rejected the Interior Ministry's offer to supply them with bodyguards, claiming the Shi'ite-led police and security forces were behind many of the political assassinations.[101]

Iraqi police arrested eight Sunni Arabs in Kirkuk on November 26, two days before Saddam's trial was scheduled to resume in Baghdad. The men were accused of plotting to assassinate Raed Juhi, one of the judges who prepared the case against Saddam. When told of the threat on his life, Juhi said, "As an Iraqi citizen and a judge, I am vulnerable to assassination attempts . . . If I thought about this danger, then I would not be able to perform my job . . . I will practice my profession in a way that serves my country and satisfies my conscience."[102]

In a February 2006 report to Congress, the Department of Defense highlighted the threats to judges in general and the security measures taken by the Coalition to attempt and protect them: "Intimidation of judges by insurgents severely affects the rule of law in Iraq. Twenty-nine secure housing units inside the protected International Zone have recently been made available to judges living in the Baghdad area. Eight CCCI (The Central Criminal Court of Iraq) judges have access to up-armored vehicles, and 33 CCI judges have trained private security details at their constant disposal."[103]

In spite of the attempts to protect individuals involved in the trial, one of Hussein's main lawyers, Khamis Al-Obeidi, was shot to death on June 21, 2006, after men wearing police uniforms abducted him from his Baghdad home. His body was found on a street near Sadr city. Al-Obeidi was the third member of Hussein's defense team to be killed since the former leader's trial began.[104]

On September 29, 2006, gunmen assassinated relatives of the judge adjudicating Hussein's trial, Mohammad al-Oreibi al-Khalifa. The judge's brother-in-law was killed and his son was wounded in Ghazaliyah, where much sectarian violence had occurred in previous months. He planned to continue as the judge of that trial, which was hearing witnesses on charges of genocide against the Kurdish community in 1988.[105]

- **"Horror" attacks, atrocities, and alienation:** Whether or not the tactics were initially deliberate, insurgents in Iraq found that atrocities like desecrating corpses and beheadings were effective political and psychological weapons for those Islamist extremists whose goal was to divide the West from the Islamic world and create an unbridgeable "clash of civilizations."

  Experts long pointed out that one of the key differences between Islamist extremist terrorism and previous forms of terrorism was that they are not seeking to negotiate with those they terrorize, but rather to create conditions that could drive the West out of the Middle East, undermine secular and moderate regimes in the Arab and Islamic worlds, and establish the conditions under which they can create "Islamic" states according to their own ideas of "Puritanism."

  This was why it served the purposes of Islamist extremists, as well as some of the more focused opponents of the United States and the West, to create mass casualties and carry out major strikes, or carry out executions and beheadings, even if the result was to provoke hostility and anger. The goal of Osama Bin Laden and those like him was not to persuade the United States or the West; it was rather to alienate them from the Islamic and Arab worlds that the forces of secularism in the region would be sharply undermined, and Western influence could be controlled or eliminated. The goal of most Iraqi insurgents was narrower—drive the United States and its allies out of Iraq—but involved many of the same methods.

Seen in this context, the more horrifying the attack, the better. Simple casualties did not receive the same media attention. They were a reality of war. Killing (or sometimes releasing) innocent hostages does grab the attention of the world media. Large bombs in crowds do the same, as does picking targets whose innocence or media impact grabs headlines. Desecrating corpses, beheading people, and similar acts of violence get even more media attention—at least for a while.

Such actions also breed anger and alienation in the United States and the West and provoke excessive political and media reactions, more stringent security measures, violent responses, and all of the other actions that help instigate a clash of civilizations. The United States and the West are often provoked into playing into the hands of such attackers.

At the same time, any attack or incident that garners massive media coverage and political reactions appears to be a "victory" to those who support Islamist extremism or those who are truly angry at the United States—even though the actual body count is often low, and victory does not mean creating stronger forces or winning political control. Each such incident can be used to damage the U.S. and Western view of the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Two incidents in particular, both involving the murder and mutilation of U.S. contractors, deserve special mention. On March 31, 2004, insurgents in Fallujah attacked two SUVs carrying four civilian contractors charged with providing security for food convoys in the area. The insurgents attacked the vehicles with rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire before pulling the bodies from the burning vehicles and dragging them through the street. Several of the bodies were mutilated, and two were strung up on a nearby bridge while local crowds chanted, "Fallujah is the graveyard of Americans." Footage of the burned and mutilated corpses was broadcast around the world.[106]

The brutality of the attack drew comparisons to a similar incident in Mogadishu a decade earlier when American soldiers were dragged through the streets by angry mobs.[107] Experts like John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org said the comparison to the 1993 attack was spot-on and suggested the Mogadishu attack probably served as an inspiration for the Fallujah attack: "They knew how to stage that. They are trying to frighten Americans. They want to frighten us out of Iraq. . . It was premeditated, planned, skillfully staged terrorism. They know the degree of dread it will inflict in American family members."[108] In July, after a three-week siege of Fallujah by U.S. Marines, a militant group calling itself the Islamic Army in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack.[109]

A similar incident occurred on September 20, 2005, when insurgents attacked a convoy of U.S. contractors north of Baghdad. The convoy, which included U.S. military guards, came under attack after making a wrong turn in the largely Sunni city of Duluiyah, 45 miles north of Baghdad. Insurgents opened gunfire on the convoy, killing four and wounding two.[110] The British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* broke the story more than a month later, with a grisly account of the attack. The paper described how the insurgents dragged two contractors from their truck and forced them to kneel, "[k]illing one of the men with a rifle round fired into the back of his head, they doused the other with petrol and set him alight. Barefoot children, yelping in delight, piled straw on the screaming man's body to stoke the flames." Afterwards, a crowd dragged the corpses through the street, chanting anti–U.S. slogans.[111] The military did not confirm

the attack (in fact, no mention of it seems to have appeared before the *Telegraph* account) until October 22 and then said only that it was investigating the incident.

In 2005, insurgents began adopting a new horror tactic, targeting funeral processions. These attacks included the following:[112]

- March 10, 2005: A suicide bomber strikes a Shi'ite mosque during a funeral in Mosul.
- March 12, 2005: Gunmen kill three Iraqi police officers as they drive to a colleague's funeral in Mosul.
- May 1, 2005: A car bomb detonates next to a tent crowded with mourners for the funeral of a Kurdish official in Tal Afar, killing 25 people and wounding more than 50.
- July 2, 2005: A bomb explodes in a local market in Mahmudiya, south of Baghdad. The attack, which kills two and wounds ten, occurs minutes after the funeral procession of Sheik Kamaleddin passed by.
- October 5, 2005: A bomb explodes outside the Shi'ite Husseiniyat Ibn al-Nama mosque in Hillah, killing 25 and wounding 87. Among the victims are mourners attending a funeral service for a local restaurant owner killed by insurgents two days earlier.
- November 19, 2005: A suicide bomber kills at least 36 people and wounds 50 more in a Shi'ite funeral procession north of Baghdad.
- January 4, 2006: A suicide bomber strikes a Shi'ite funeral east of Baquba, killing 37 people and wounding 45 others.

  These attacks, the majority of which targeted Shi'ites, received a lot of media attention. After the January 2006 bombing, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan released a statement saying he was "appalled" by the suicide bombing. Annan also condemned the crime, saying it targeted innocent civilians "in total disrespect for human life and dignity." The Secretary-General urged all parties to come together and refrain from violence that could undermine the country's recent democratic progress.[113]

  As the trend toward more widespread civil conflict progressed, Shi'ite militias used horror attacks against Sunnis. In 2006, dozens of bodies were found every night in Baghdad and across the country, usually with signs of torture; this became the most common type of killing in the country.

- **"Body dumps":** Body dumps became a major Sunni and Shi'ite variation of horror attacks and atrocities. It became increasingly difficult to determine who was responsible for body dumps, and there were clear indications that the number of Shi'ites killing Sunnis increased steadily in 2005, just as Sunni insurgents increased their killings of Shi'ites. As the civil conflict escalated in 2006, body dumps became a daily occurrence in much of the country, but particularly in Baghdad. Most bodies were found tortured and shot execution-style by Shi'ite militias and rogue armed groups.

  It was clear, however, the bodies of Iraqi forces, progovernment Iraqis, and other Iraqis who had no links to Shi'ite attacks were dumped in rivers, soccer stadiums, and other public places where they were found without any clear picture as to who had killed them or why. In mid-March 2005, for example, some 80 bodies were found in

four dumps in Iraq, many of which were police officers and soldiers.[114] Other notable discoveries in late 2005 included the following:[115]

- April 20, 2005: One hundred bodies are retrieved from the Tigris River, near the town of Madain.
- April 22, 2005: The bodies of 19 Iraqi soldiers are found near Beiji.
- May 15, 2005: The bodies of 38 men shot execution-style are discovered at an abandoned chicken farm, west of Baghdad.
- May 28, 2005: The mutilated bodies of ten Iraqi Shi'ite Muslim pilgrims are found the desert near the town of Qaim.
- June 10, 2005: The bodies of 16 people are discovered in western Iraq.
- June 12, 2005: Police discover 28 bodies in and around Baghdad.
- August 14, 2005: Captured insurgents lead Iraqi police to a grave containing 30 bodies in southern Baghdad.
- August 25, 2005: Iraqi police discover 36 bodies in southeastern Baghdad.
- September 3, 2005: Police discover three bodies in the Tigris River, north of Baghdad.
- September 5, 2005: The bodies of three local politicians are found in Tal Afar.
- September 8, 2005: Police discover 14 bodies near Mahmoudiyah.
- September 9, 2005: The bodies of ten decapitated Iraqis are found.
- September 12, 2005: Police in Baghdad discover the bodies of ten Iraqi men.
- September 17, 2005: A total of 11 bodies, handcuffed and blindfolded, are found around the country.
- September 18, 2005: Twenty bodies are pulled from the Tigris River, north of Baghdad.
- September 22, 2005: The bodies of ten Iraqis are discovered in Mosul.
- September 28, 2005: The bodies of seven Sunni men from Hurriya are found in Shula.
- October 3, 2005: Three bodies are found in Baghdad.
- October 7, 2005: The bodies of 22 executed Sunnis are discovered in Badra, near the border with Iran.
- October 11, 2005: A U.S. Army patrol in Tikrit discovers three bodies with multiple gunshot wounds.
- October 26, 2005: The bodies of nine Iraqi border guards are found in Karbala.
- October 27, 2005: The bodies of 17 Sunnis are found in Al-Nasiriyah Governorate.
- October 30, 2005: Iraqi police discover 14 bodies near Tal Afar. The victims appeared to have been killed one to three months before.
- November 10, 2005: Iraqi soldiers discover the bodies of 27 executed civilians near the border with Iran.
- November 14, 2005: Four bodies are discovered in northern Baghdad.

- November 27, 2005: The bodies of three Iraqi soldiers are discovered in the Baghdad slum of Habibya.
- December 27, 2005: Iraqi authorities discover the remains of 31 people in a mass grave in Karbala. The remains were believed to be from the 1991 Gulf War.
- December 31, 2005: The bodies of five Iraqis are found in southern Baghdad. Four bodies had been dumped in a river, and the fifth, half-tortured, was found in an orchard.

As the previous list shows, most of the body dumps were found in the greater Baghdad area. Some 300 mass graves had been discovered since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in March 2003.[116] According to the Associated Press, at least 204 of the 566 bodies that were found since the interim government was formed on April 28 were discovered in Baghdad. Although the identities of most victims are unknown, the Associated Press identified 116 Sunnis, 43 Shi'ites, and one Kurd among the victims.[117] The frequency of these discoveries appeared to increase in the run-up to the October election.

Body dumps continued in 2006. Political leaders, former Ba'ath Party members, and police recruits were common victims.

- January 18, 2006: Seven Shi'ites are found murdered in Wahdah; 25 bodies are discovered in Nibaei.
- January 20, 2006: Police say they found seven bodies in Dujail.
- January 22, 2006: The bodies of the 23 men are found partially buried near Dujail, about 50 miles north of Baghdad.
- January 23, 2006: The bodies of eight Sunni Arabs are found in a field north of Baghdad five days after they were seized on their way home by bus after being rejected for admission to the police academy.
- January 26, 2006: Police find four bound and blindfolded bodies riddled with bullet holes in Mahmoudiya.
- January 28, 2006: Police find the buried bodies of six laborers who had been bound, gagged, and shot in the head south of the southern city of Karbala.
- January 31, 2006: In Baghdad, police find the bodies of 11 handcuffed, blindfolded men inside a truck near the Ghazaliyah district of western Baghdad. Three other bodies are found in Baghdad's Rustamiyah area.
- February 4, 2006: The bullet-riddled bodies of 14 Sunni Arab men purportedly seized by police a week ago are found dumped in Baghdad.
- February 16, 2006: The bodies of 12 men are found dead, shot execution-style in the head.

After the February 22 attack on a sacred Shi'ite shrine, the wave of sectarian killings that followed marked an increase in both the frequency of body dumps and the numbers of bodies discovered in each instance. These often included Iraqis who were not members of the police, military, or security forces, but rather civilian Shi'ites or Sunnis. It became increasingly clear in 2006 that the majority of bodies dumped in Baghdad and other urban areas were the work of Shi'ite militias. Most showed signs of torture and were killed execution-style. By the end of 2006 the United States and Iraq said sectarian executions were the number one killer of Iraqis. The list of body

dumps underestimates the numbers found on a daily basis. As the sectarian violence spread out from Baghdad, it became impossible to count those found dead in more rural areas, and it is likely that many bodies were never turned into morgues or hospitals.

- February 23, 2006: At least 47 bodies are found scattered across Iraq.
- February 24, 2006: Police find at least 27 bodies in Baghdad and other cities and towns.
- February 25, 2006: Eleven bodies are discovered in various locations across Baghdad.
- February 28, 2006: Authorities in Baquba discover nine bodies, each shot in the head.

The number of body dumps increased in March 2006. By the end of the month, over 385 people were assassinated. The total, if including the last six days in February, was at least 486.[118] "Body dumps" continued to be found through 2006. By the end of the year, police were finding an average of 50 bodies a day. On December 21, 2006, a record number of 76 bodies were found in Baghdad. All were men aged 20–55, and some showed signs of torture. They were killed with automatic weapons. The majority of body dumps were in the capital, but as the civil war spread across the country, sectarian killings produced such atrocities in numerous cities. For example, on October 15, 2006, about 80 bodies were found in 24 hours in the neighboring cities of Balal and Duluiyah after a week of sectarian fighting.

Body dumps continued well into 2007. There was, however, a reduction in the number of bodies found on the streets of Baghdad at the start of the new security plan in mid-February 2007. This was due to the increased presence of U.S. and Iraqi forces in the capital as part of the "surge" strategy and the fact that Moqtada al-Sadr had stood down his loyalists in the Mahdi Army. On the average, 10–20 bodies were now found in the capital daily as a result of sectarian violence. Body dumps, however, rose in areas surrounding Baghdad. In Baquba, for example, bodies were found almost daily. On April 28, 2007, for example, police found 27 bodies in Baquba.

- **Seek to create sanctuaries like Fallujah and the river areas in Al Anbar, Ninevah, and Mosul Provinces; seek to take shelter in mosques, shrines, high-value targets, and targets with high-cultural impact:** Again, exploiting facilities of religious, cultural, and political sensitivity was not a new tactic. However, as operations against al-Sadr and in Fallujah showed, the tactics raised the media profile, created a defensive deterrent, and could be exploited to make the United States seem anti-Islamic or to be attacking a culture and not a movement.

Areas like mosques were also used by insurgents to conduct meetings and serve as sanctuaries by allowing them to give orders face-to-face without having to worry about a U.S. presence.[119] For example in April 2006, Marines on patrol in Ramadi encountered fire from a mosque minaret and were forced to use a tank to destroy part of the structure where the insurgents were holed up. It marked the fourth time in a three-week period that attacks had emanated from the mosque.[120]

In a different case, driving insurgent cells out of Iraq's cities in 2004 led them to move into Anbar Province, and to seek shelter in towns along the route from the Syrian border along the Euphrates, and through Qaim, Rawa, Haithah, and Fallujah to

Baghdad. Insurgents also took refuge in the largely Sunni towns and cities along the Tigris from Mosul to Baghdad.

The areas along the rivers gave the insurgents a population to hide in and disperse among. Unlike the flat desert areas, there were also hills, tree cover, and numerous built-up areas, with many potential ambush sites and predictable lines of communication where IEDs could be implanted.

While Coalition forces could always enter such areas, they could rarely stop the insurgents from dispersing and later regrouping—at least in those cases where no permanent garrison and defense force were deployed and the Iraqi government did not provide effective governance.[121] As late as the winter of 2005, insurgents continued to exert control over a number of Iraqi cities. In early December, some 300 insurgents took over the streets of Ramadi for several hours. One eyewitness told the *Washington Times,* "It was easy for them to take Ramadi . . . it was like a message to the American and Iraqi forces to show their power, their ability to take a city.[122]

In many other incidents, insurgents held cities for several days or weeks at time. Faris and Ameriya, two cities in Anbar Province, were without police officers for seven months in 2005, from February until September.[123]

- **Exploit, exaggerate, and falsify U.S. attacks that cause civilian casualties, collateral damage, friendly fire against local allies, and incidents where the United States can be blamed for being anti-Arab and anti-Islam:** Terrorists and insurgents found they can use the media, rumor, and conspiracy theories to exploit the fact that the United States often fights a military battle without proper regard for the fact that it is also fighting a political, ideological, and psychological war.

  Real incidents of U.S. misconduct such as the harsh treatment of detainees and prisoners, and the excessive security measures were cases in point. So too are careless political and media rhetoric by U.S. officials and military officers.

  Bin Laden, the Iraqi insurgents, etc., all benefited from every Western action that unnecessarily angered or frustrated the Arab and Islamic worlds. They were not fighting to influence Western or world opinion; they were fighting a political and psychological war to dominate Iraq and the Arab and Islamic worlds.

  In one instance a joint U.S.–Iraqi raid on a suspected insurgent hideout was portrayed in the Iraqi media as an assault on a mosque, which killed 16 worshippers. The "mosque" was marked on the outside by a sign that read "Al-Moustafa Husayniyah." "Husayniyah" is a Shi'ite term for a religious center or a community center that may also house offices for political purposes. Thus, although the complex did not have many of the traditional characteristics of a "mosque," it was considered to be one by the Shi'ites nonetheless.[124]

  Regardless of whether the facility was a mosque, a prayer room, or neither, the operation had damaging political effects.

- **Attack, kill, and kidnap Iraqi politicians, government leaders, and employees in an attempt to disrupt the political process:** This tactic discourages political participation or, in the case of the Sunni delegation, deprives the committee of the necessary numbers of Sunni participants to move forward. Proceeding without the requisite numbers of Shi'ites, Sunnis, and Kurds would thus bring the committee's legitimacy into question.

  After weeks of protesting their lack of representation on the constitutional committee, Sunni Arab groups reached a compromise with senior members of the

Shi'ite-dominated body on June 16, 2005. Under the deal, 15 Sunni Arab representatives joined the committee. As a result, the committee grew in size from 55 to 70. An additional 10 Sunni Arabs were given special advisory roles, serving as consultants in the constitutional process. U.S. officials strongly supported the changes in the hopes that it would lead to greater Sunni participation in the upcoming constitutional referendum.

Insurgents did not take long to strike, however. On July 19, gunmen assassinated Mijbil Issa, one of the newly appointed Sunni delegates working on the constitution. His bodyguard and one of the Sunni consultants, Dhamin Hussein al-Obeidi, were also killed. The three men were leaving a Baghdad restaurant when three gunmen inside a minibus opened gunfire on the car carrying them. For many of Iraq's Sunnis, the violence showed the consequences of participating in Iraq's new political process.

On July 20, the 12 remaining members of the Sunni Arab delegation—two had resigned earlier after being threatened by insurgents—suspended their membership in protest over the murder. Five days later, the delegation ended its boycott and returned to the committee.

Members of the Iraqi National Assembly were frequent targets of attacks by insurgents beginning in 2005. After the December 2005 elections, attacks against political and government figures did not decrease. Insurgents continued to attack Sunnis involved in the political process who were viewed as moderates against the cause of Islamic extremists. Insurgents also attacked Shi'ite politicians who increasingly seemed complicit in the soft sectarian cleansing waged by Shi'ite militias against Sunnis. Although many believed Sunni members of the Assembly were being singled out for attacks, a list of some of those killed shows that both Shi'ites and Kurds were among the victims as well:

- April 27, 2005: Insurgents in Baghdad gun down Lamia Abed Khadouri Sakri. She was elected in January as part of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Iraqi List Party, which received 40 seats in the new cabinet. Sakri is the first member of the Iraqi National Assembly to be assassinated.
- June 28, 2005: A suicide attack takes the life of Sheik Dhari Fayad, the oldest member of the Iraqi National Assembly.
- July 30, 2005: Sheik Khalaf Aliyan, a member of the Sunni National Dialogue Council, escapes an assassination attempt in southern Baghdad.

These targeted political attacks spiked in August:

- August 1, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen storm the house of Haider Mohammed Ali al-Dujaili, an aide to Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Chalabi, and kill him.
- August 3, 2005: Gunmen kill General Abdel Salam Rauf Saleh, the head of the Interior Ministry's commando unit. Also in Baghdad, gunmen kill a police colonel and two Finance Ministry employees.
- August 4, 2005: In Diyala, gunmen kill the director of planning for the region.
- August 8, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen assassinate two officials from the Oil Ministry and wound two others.
- August 9, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Abbas Ibrahim Mohammed, an Iraqi Cabinet employee, in Baghdad.

- August 10, 2005: Gunmen kidnap Brig. Gen. Khudayer Abbas, head of administrative affairs for the Ministry of the Interior.
- August 14, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen kidnap Husam Kazim Juwayid, general manager of the central bank.
- August 15, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Muhammad Husayn, a member of the municipal council of Al-Khalis. A failed assassination attempt is carried out on Iraqi Vice-President Adil Ab-al-Mahdi in Al-Azim.
- August 16, 2005: Gunmen attack and wound several bodyguards of former Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi.
- August 17, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Ali al-Shimmari, a local imam and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, in northeastern Baghdad.
- August 18, 2005: Unknown gunmen assassinate Jasim Waheeb, a Baghdad judge.
- August 19, 2005: Insurgents in Mosul gun down three members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, the country's largest Sunni party. Gunmen kill Aswad al-Ali, an Arab member of a local council near Kirkuk.
- August 25, 2005: Insurgents attack the convoy of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani south of Tuz Khormato, killing two bodyguards and wounding three others
- August 26, 2005: In Mosul, gunmen kill Jiyam Hussein, the leader of the local Reform Party. Gunmen assassinate an Iraqi police officer in northeast Baghdad.
- September 17, 2005: Gunmen kill Faris Nasir Hussein, a member of Iraq's Shabak ethnic minority. Hussein was elected to parliament on the Kurdish ticket. The attack, which took place on a road from Mosul, also injured another politician, Haidar Qassem.
- October 30, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Ghalib Abdul Mahdi, adviser to the cabinet of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and brother of Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi. Madhi was being driven to work in Baghdad by his driver when the two were ambushed and killed. Gunmen struck again later in the day, wounding the deputy trade minister, Qais Dawood al-Hassan.[125] Such attacks, attempts by the insurgents to weaken the new government, are becoming more frequent.

After the success of the October 2005 referendum, insurgents stepped up their attacks against Iraqi politicians in preparation for the December 15 parliamentary elections. As part of pre-election violence, insurgents unleashed a wave of assassinations and kidnappings targeting candidates running in the elections as well as election workers. For the month of November, these included the following:

- November 3, 2005: An Internet statement posted on a Web site by al-Qa'ida in Iraq says the group had kidnapped Majida Yussef Sael, a candidate in the December elections and a member of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's party.
- November 8, 2005: In Kirkuk, insurgents kidnap Hatam Mahdi al-Hassani, the brother of a leading Sunni Arab politician.
- November 12, 2005: Jamal Khaz'al, the Chairman of the Iraqi Islamic Party in Basra, escapes an assassination attempt.
- November 13, 2005: Insurgents assassinate Kiaweh, a member of the Al-Naafi Advisory Council.

- November 17, 2005: Tariq al-Ma'muri, the Deputy Chairman of the Al-Ummah al-Iraqiyah Party and a candidate for the upcoming elections, escapes an assassination attempt in Al-Qut.
- November 18, 2005: For the second day in a row, Ma'muri escapes an assassination attempt, this time in southern Baghdad.
- November 18, 2005: Insurgents kidnap Tawfiq al-Yasiri, Secretary General of Iraqi Democratic Coalition and Shams al-Iraq candidate.
- November 22, 2005: Unknown gunmen break into the headquarters of the Communist Party's branch offices in Sadr City and kill two activists.
- November 23, 2005: Insurgents wearing Iraqi Army uniforms burst into the home of Khadim Sarhid al-Hemaiyem, a Sunni candidate in the upcoming elections and the head of Iraq's Batta clan, killing him along with three of his sons and his son-in-law.
- November 26, 2005: In a statement posted on an Islamist Web site, al-Qa'ida in Iraq announces it had killed Miqdad Ahmed Sito, a Kurdish election activist, on November 22 in Mosul.
- November 28, 2005: Gunmen in Baghdad kill Ayad Alizi and Ali Hussein. Both were members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni party that had boycotted the January elections but was running candidates in the December elections. Alizi had been selected to run as part of a Sunni ticket.
- November 28, 2005: Gunmen in southern Baghdad kill Ghalib al-Sideri, a candidate for the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue.
- November 28, 2005: Insurgents attack members of the Assyrian Party in Mosul, killing two and wounding two others.
- November 30, 2005: Gunmen fire on the home of Salama Khafaji, a prominent female Shi'ite politician, wounding two guards.
- December 4, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen kill Sheik Abdul-Salam Abdul-Hussein, a Shi'ite Muslim candidate running in the upcoming general elections and a follower of Moqtada al-Sadr.

  Assassinations, attempted assassinations, and kidnappings of political figures, government workers, and their families continued even after the elections had ended.
- December 17, 2005: Gunmen kill two relatives of a senior Kurdish official in Mosul. The men, Dhiab Hamad al-Hamdani and his son, were relatives of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Party official Khodr Hassan al-Hamdani.
- December 19, 2005: Ziyad Ali al-Zawba'i, the Deputy Governor of Baghdad, and three of his bodyguards escape an assassination attempt in the western Baghdad district of Al-Amil. The brother of Sa'd Nayif al-Hardan, Minister of State for Governorate Affairs, is kidnapped in Al-Khalidiyah City in western Iraq.
- December 22, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Sheik Saffah Nayif al-Fayyad, a tribal leader of the Al Bu-Amir tribe, north of Baghdad.
- January 3, 2006: In Baghdad, gunmen kidnap the sister of Bayan Jabr, the Interior Minister.

- January 4, 2006: Gunmen kill Rahim Ali Sudani, a Director-General at the Oil Ministry, in Baghdad.
- January 18, 2006: The bodies of three men, including a relative of Iraq's defense minister, are found with gunshot wounds to the head in a Baghdad apartment. Gunmen in the area of Al-Ghazaliyah in western Baghdad assassinate the bodyguard of Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.
- January 21, 2006: A roadside bomb blast wounds five bodyguards of President Jalal Talabani in northern Iraq.
- January 26, 2006: Two Iraqi government employees are gunned down by drive-by militants in separate attacks in the northern city of Kirkuk. One was a senior official of Iraq's anticorruption commission.
- February 8, 2006: Iraq's higher education minister escapes unharmed from a car bomb attack on his convoy that lightly wounds three of his bodyguards.
- February 12, 2006: A group of armed men in a speeding car kill Education Ministry official Karim Selman al-Zaidi in Baqouba.
- February 13, 2006: Iraq's former Electricity Minister, Ayham al-Samarie, escapes injury when a roadside bomb explodes near his three-vehicle convoy in Baghdad, but two bodyguards are wounded.
- February 28, 2006: A car bomb targeting a convoy for an advisor to the Defense Ministry, Daham Radhi Assal, injures three.
- March 2, 2006: Gunmen open fire on the car of Iraqi Sunni political leader of the Iraqi Accordance Front Adnan al-Dulaimi, killing a bodyguard and wounding three others as the car was stopped to repair a punctured tire.
- April 3, 2006: A prominent Sunni Arab politician, Salih Mutlaq, said that his brother had been kidnapped ten days ago, in a Sunni area north of Baghdad.
- April 12, 2006: An internal affairs officer at the Interior Ministry is killed by men in two cars while leaving his house in western Baghdad. A Housing Ministry employee is killed as he drove to work in the same neighborhood, police said. In northern Baghdad, gunmen shoot down an Oil Ministry worker at a bus stop.
- April 13, 2006: A Foreign Ministry worker is kidnapped and a Health Ministry laborer is wounded in a shooting that kills her driver. A Housing Ministry employee is also wounded in a drive-by shooting. Gunmen kill the brother of prominent Sunni politician Tariq al-Hashemi.
- April 17, 2006: The body of the brother of Saleh al-Mutlak, a conservative Sunni parliament member, is found. He was kidnapped two weeks prior.
- May 9, 2006: Two judges are killed in Baghdad: A judge in Al-Adhamiya First Instance Court, Mr. Mohaimen Al-Mahmood, was gunned down outside his home, and a judge in Central Criminal Court in Iraq, Mr. Iskandar Al-Jiboury, was poisoned along with his bodyguards.
- May 10, 2006: Gunmen kill a press manager for the Ministry of Defense in the Bayaa district of Baghdad. In the northern Baghdad neighborhood of Shoala, gunmen kill an employee of the Ministry of Finance.

- May 12, 2006: A lawyer who is the son of the president of the High Judicial Council is killed along with his bodyguards.
- May 14, 2006: Four guards for Iraq's foreign minister are killed and five are wounded by a roadside bomb while on their way from Erbil.
- May 19, 2006: Omer Serri, the secretary of Ramadi's governor, is shot and killed while driving in western Anbar Province.
- May 21, 2006: A judge from the Al-Kharkh court in Baghdad, Mr. Akrem Jumaa Al-Maamori, is killed.
- May 22, 2006: Gunmen shoot and kill Hameed Rodhan, a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Youth, in the Sadiya neighborhood in southern Baghdad.
- May 25, 2006: Brig. Gen. Khalil al-Abadi, head of the Defense Ministry logistics office, is wounded in an ambush as he was being driven to work in the Zafraniyah district. His driver is also wounded.
- May 30, 2006: Jamal Kadhim Hassoun al-Zamili, former Governor of Diwaniyah City, is killed in a drive-by shooting.
- May 31, 2006: A bomb hidden in an air conditioner explodes in the mayor's office in Muqdadiyah, killing the mayor, Sheik Allaywi Farhan al-Dulaimi, a member of the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, and wounds three of his guards.
- June 7, 2006: Gunmen open fire on an employee of the president's office as he was driving, injuring him.
- June 9, 2006: In Mosul, Anwar Hussein Abdullatef, a former Deputy Governor, is killed by unknown gunmen.
- June 9, 2006: Also in Mosul, gunmen kill the brother of the Governor of Ninewa, Mr. Zuhayr Kashmula, and four others as they are leaving prayers.
- June 10, 2006: The Governor of Ninewa, Duraid Kashmula, survives an assassination attempt while attending his brother's funeral.
- June 21, 2006: Up to 80 employees of the Ministry of Industry are captured on their way to largely Shi'a neighborhoods throughout Baghdad. The woman and children are immediately released as are several others who show the kidnappers fake Sunni identification cards.[126]
- June 23, 2006: Gunmen assassinate Musa Hachim, director of the Iraqi Intelligence Service's Tikrit office.
- July 2, 2006: Gunmen ambush a convoy carrying Laqa al-Yaseen, a Shi'ite legislator, as she was driving through a region south of Baghdad. Although the legislator escapes unharmed, eight of her guards are abducted and two are wounded in a shootout.
- July 5, 2006: Gunmen in camouflage uniforms kidnap Deputy Electricity Minister Raed al-Hares, along with 11 of his bodyguards in eastern Baghdad, but they are released several hours later.
- July 17, 2006: Gunmen kill Maj. Gen. Fakhri Abdul Hassan Ali, Chief of the Legal Office in the MOI.
- August 30, 2006: Gunmen kill Nadiya Muhammad Hasan, Director General of the Public Notary in the Ministry of Justice.

- September 15, 2006: Sheik Muhanad al-Gharairi, a spokesman for a Sunni political party, is shot and killed by gunmen.
- September 17, 2006: Gunmen assassinate the vocal Sunni politician and official with the Iraqi Accordance Front, Mohammed Shihab Dulaimi, as he returns from an interview.
- September 24, 2006: In the city of Fallujah, gunmen break into the home of City Council Head Najim Abdulla Suod, killing him and his 23-year-old son.
- October 2, 2006: Armed men attempt to kidnap four female employees of the Finance Ministry, but police manage to fight them off. Gunmen also shoot at an Education Ministry convoy, killing one guard.
- October 6, 2006: Shi'ite militias kill Mohammed Ridha Mohammed. He was a member of the Islamic Group, a conservative Sunni party in the Kurdish Alliance that is the second largest bloc in parliament. He and his driver were abducted after leaving government offices and their tortured bodies were later found in another part of Baghdad. Mohammed was the first lawmaker abducted from Mr. Maliki's six-month-old government.
- October 9, 2006: Shi'ite gunmen assassinate the brother of Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi. The gunmen wore Iraqi military uniforms when they broke into Lt. Gen. Amir al-Hashimi's home. He was a Defense Ministry adviser and the third of the vice president's siblings to be killed in 2006.
- October 17, 2006: Gunmen shoot dead Muftah al-Herki, a member of the PUK, in a drive-by shooting in Mosul.
- November 14, 2006: Between 100 and 150 employees and visitors at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Scholarships and Cultural Relations Directorate in the downtown Karradah district are kidnapped by about 80 gunmen.
- November 19, 2006: Deputy Health Minister Ammar al-Assafar is kidnapped by gunmen dressed in security uniforms from his home in the Baghdad Sunni district of Adhamiyah.
- November 21, 2006: A bomb explodes in an armored car among those belonging to the speaker of parliament, wounding the American security guard who was driving it out of a parking area in the government Green Zone and disrupting a meeting of lawmakers nearby, a parliamentary aide said. Though the speaker, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, was not in the vehicle and was unscathed, the assassination attempt is one of the most serious breaches of security yet within the Green Zone.
- November 23, 3006: About 30 militants attacked the Iraqi Health Ministry in central Baghdad with mortars and gunfire, an Interior Ministry source and the deputy health minister said. The ministry source said five people were wounded.
- December 2, 2006: Deputy Prime Minister Salam Zikam Ali Zubaie, a member of the major Sunni legislative bloc, is targeted by gunmen while his convoy was traveling in Ghazaliya, a majority Sunni area of Baghdad, police said. He was unharmed, but one of his bodyguards was injured. Rockets strike near the office of Adnan Dulaimi, leader of a major Sunni party within Zubaie's bloc.

- December 18, 2006: Gunmen kill a woman and wound two others when they attack a group of female staff at the Ministry of Education in the Amil district in southwestern Baghdad.
- December 22, 2006: Ahmed al-Yaseen, brother of Sunni Accordance Front parliament member Abdel Kareem al-Yaseen, is killed along with his wife when a car bomb explodes in front of his home in Samarra. His four children are also wounded, police said.
- December 23, 2006: A bodyguard of Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi is killed by a "foreigner assailant" near the office of Abdul Mahdi in Baghdad, the vice president's office said.
- December 26, 2006: Gunmen kidnap Muhanad Ahmed Saleh, director of the Baghdad International Fair, on his way to work in the Amiriya district in western Baghdad.
- December 27, 2006: Gunmen attack a bus carrying employees of the Ministry of Higher Education and wound two of them in a drive-by shooting in the Yarmouk district in western Baghdad.
- December 28, 2006: A suicide bomber in a minibus attacks the offices of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in the northern city of Mosul, witnesses said.
- January 8, 2007: Gunmen kidnap a senior tribal chief named Naji Hussein Jubara in Salahaddin Province, seizing him from his car on the road north of Samarra, police said. Jubara is the brother of the deputy governor of the province.
- January 9, 2007: Gunmen kidnap Abdul Ghafour al-Jouburi, Head of the Customs Department in northern Iraq.
- January 11, 2007: Gunmen kidnap eight high-ranking Oil Ministry officials on the their way to work in Baghdad. The gunmen separated Shi'ites from Sunnis, beat the Shi'ites, then took the four Sunnis with them and said that their bodies would be found on the streets the following day.
- January 22, 2007: Sunni insurgents of Ansar al-Sunna kidnap the governor of Diyala Province and burn down his office.
- January 24, 2007: Gunmen open fire on the motorcade of Abd Dhiab al-Ajili, the Minister of Higher Education, on a highway in the southern Doura district of Baghdad, killing one of his guards and seriously wounding another.
- January 28, 2007: Gunmen ambush the director general of Iraq's Industry Ministry in Baghdad's western Yarmouk district as he drives to work, killing him, his daughter, and two others.
- January 31, 2007: Saadeddine Ergech, the leader of Iraqi Turkmen Front, the largest political party in Kirkuk, escapes a roadside bomb attack near Kirkuk.
- February 4, 2007: Gunmen kill an employee from the Ministry of Justice when they open fire on his car in eastern Baghdad. Gunmen also kill two employees of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in an attack on their car in northeastern Baghdad.
- February 8, 2007: Gunmen attack the convoy of Ammar Tu'uma, a member of the Fadhila Shi'ite political party, and wound one of his guards near the Mansour district in western Baghdad.

- February 28, 2007: Gunmen kill Abdul-Hadi Mahmoud, the head of a government office in Mosul that issues identity cards.
- March 15, 2007: Gunmen ambush the convoy of Sadr City Mayor Rahim al-Darah, seriously wounding him.
- March 19, 2007: Police find the bullet-riddled body of Khalaf al-Dalfi, mayor of the town of Wasit.
- March 28, 2007: Gunmen kidnap Hassan Abdul-Lateef, an official of the Iraqi Customs Office in central Baghdad.
- April 1, 2007: Omar al-Jubouri, a member of the Sunni Islamic Party and a parliament member, escapes a roadside bomb attack in the Yarmouk district of western Baghdad.
- April 9, 2007: Police say they found the body of a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) who was stabbed to death near Kirkuk.
- April 11, 2007: Gunmen kill Abdul Abbas Hashim, a General Director in the Electricity Ministry, along with his driver in a drive-by shooting in northern Baghdad.
- April 21, 2007: Gunmen shoot the head of the Fallujah municipal council, Sami al-Jumaily, in a drive-by shooting in central Fallujah; his predecessor was killed a month earlier.
- May 8, 2007: The bodies of three personal guards of Iraq's minister of higher education are found shot dead in Baghdad.
- May 9, 2007: Gunmen kill a general director in the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction in northern Baghdad.
- May 18, 2007: Gunmen kill Hadi al-Rubaie in Baghdad, a senior figure of the Iraqi National Accord political movement.
- May 21, 2007: The office of Adnan al-Dulaimi, the head of the biggest Sunni group in parliament, says the Iraqi Army fired at his motorcade in the Adil district in western Baghdad.

METHODS OF ATTACK IN COMBAT

There is no clear division between the mix of insurgent and terrorist tactics focused on the political and psychological nature of war and those that focused more directly on attacking military targets like MNF-I and Iraqi government forces, Iraqi and Coalition officials, and the Iraqi economy and the nation-building process. The insurgents again made major adaptations in their tactics and methods of attack that still further increased the problems in creating effective Iraqi forces and stalled the political process. In general, with the exception of Moqtada al-Sadr's campaign against U.S. forces in the fall of 2004, Shi'ite militias did not attack MNF-I forces as an organized tactic, and militia leaders chose to infiltrate Iraqi forces, rather than oppose them. However, public opinion was decidedly against the Coalition presence by 2007, and troops were increasingly caught between sides in the sectarian conflict.

- **Adapt targets to place maximum pressure on Iraqi social and political apparatuses:** Insurgents progressively adapted their tactics to focus greater attention on Iraqi military forces and police. In January 2005, 109 Iraq police and military forces were killed through insurgent activity. By May, this number had spiked to 259, and by July, 304.[127]

  As the Iraqi constitutional process unfolded—which the Sunnis were largely absent from due to their widespread boycott of the parliamentary election—sectarian violence became increasingly apparent. Sunni attacks on Iraqi security and political figures increased as radicals sought to derail the political process. On August 19, 2005, three Sunni election workers were kidnapped in Mosul, driven to Al Noor, and executed before a throng of people gathered before the Al Noor mosque. Of the election workers murdered, one was identified as Faris Yunis Abdullah, a senior official in the mostly Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party. The three men were posting placards encouraging Iraqis to vote in the October 15 election when they were abducted.[128]

  In the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006, the number of Iraqi military forces and police killed per month hovered around 200. In November, December, and January, deaths totaled 176, 193, and 194, respectively.[129] Targeting Iraqi security forces continued through 2006, and by the end of the year, some 6,000 ISF had been killed since their formation. The total rose steadily in 2007 and almost 7,000 Iraqi forces had been killed by June. The worst month was April 2007, when some 300 ISF were killed. This was the second month of the new Baghdad security plan announced by President Bush on January 10, 2007, and both U.S. and Iraqi forces had an increased presence on the streets in Baghdad.

- **Suicide bombs, car bombs, and mass bombings:** The use of such tactics increased steadily after late 2003, in part due to the high success rate relative to alternative methods of attack. By late 2004, exploding vehicles accounted for approximately 60 percent of Iraqi police and recruit fatalities.[130] Suicide attacks increased and killed and wounded Iraqis in large numbers. The number of car bombs rose from 420 in 2004 to 873 in 2005, the number of suicide car bombs rose from 133 to 411, and the number of suicide vest attacks rose from 7 in 2004 to 67 in 2005.[131] In case after case, Shi'ite civilians and Sunnis cooperating with the government were successfully targeted in ways designed to create a serious civil war.

  According to the Associated Press, there were 190 suicide bomb attacks in the six months between the creation of the Interim Iraqi Government on April 28 and October 28, 2005. Suicide attacks claimed some 1,458 lives, roughly one-third of all violence-related deaths during this period. Of the 3,902 Iraqis killed, 1,128 were security personnel and the overwhelming majority, 2,744, were civilians. More than 40 percent of the fatalities occurred in the greater Baghdad area. After Baghdad, the cities with the largest number of fatalities from suicide attacks were Mosul, Tal Afar, Balad, and Kirkuk with 196, 188, 124, and 118 deaths, respectively. September proved to be the deadliest month for these attacks, with at least 804 people killed. That number fell by almost half in October.[132]

  The trend continued into the winter. In November, there were only 23 suicide attacks, the lowest number in seven months. Maj. Gen. Mark Lynch attributed the drop to successful U.S. and Iraqi operations along the Syrian border designed to prevent weapons and insurgents from infiltrating Iraq. Lynch said at least 96 percent of suicide bombers come from outside of Iraq.[133]

It was not always clear that suicide-bombing techniques were tactically necessary. In many cases, timed devices could produce the same damage. Events in Iraq showed, however, that suicide bombers had a major psychological impact and gained exceptional media attention. They also came to serve as symbols of dedication and commitment, could be portrayed as a form of Islamic martyrdom, and attracted more political support and attention among those sympathetic to the cause involved.

The "cost" of suicide bombers was also low. While no reliable figures are available, only about 10 percent seemed to have been Iraqis as of August 2005, and most had been recruited from outside Iraq by various Islamist organizations. Key sources were North Africa, the Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Gulf States like Saudi Arabia, and Central Asia.

The limited evidence available indicates that many were chosen because they could be persuaded to seek Islamic martyrdom, and do so collectively and without trying to call great public attention to themselves. They often could be rapidly indoctrinated and given minimal training and then be used as "force multipliers" for relatively small Islamic extremist groups. A single volunteer could use a strap-on bomb, or single vehicle filled with explosives, penetrate a crowded area or high-profile target area, and then set off an explosion producing high casualties.

Many of these attacks were aimed at soft targets such as Iraqi civilians. The increase in the use of explosive vests worn by individuals in some cases enabled the attacker to infiltrate into areas populated with Iraqi forces, often secured by a perimeter designed to defend against car bombs and suicide car bombers.

Even when such attacks failed to reach their targets the explosion often got intense public and media attention. They also became political weapons by exploiting the fact that Arab Sunni Islamists were being used to kill and maim large numbers of Arab Shi'ites and Kurds, as well as any Sunni volunteers and military in the Iraqi forces. Some of the larger weapons approached the status of weapons of mass terrorism, and even much smaller levels of casualties got enough attention to make them weapons of mass media and weapons of mass politics—tools that could be used to encourage ethnic and sectarian civil war. In the spring of 2005, some 170 such attacks were conducted in April, 151 in May, and 133 in June.

These attacks generated even greater public and media attention when women carried them out. Al-Zarqawi asserted that many Iraqi females came to him asking to be dispatched on suicide missions. In the past, he used this to try and shame Iraqi males into volunteering for suicide missions.[134] Although Saddam Hussein's security forces used female bombers at least once during the 2003 war, al-Qa'ida in Iraq did not begin using female suicide bombers until the fall of 2005. (Prior to 2005, Coalition forces had reported capturing a number of female suicide bombers on foot, including one trying to enter the Green Zone in October 2003.)[135]

The first female suicide attack occurred on September 28 in the city of Tal Afar. After having been denied entry to a civil military operations building, the bomber detonated her explosives in a nearby square where Iraqi civilians and U.S. soldiers often interacted. The attack claimed the lives of five civilians and injured more than 30. Al-Zarqawi's organization asserted responsibility for the attack in an Internet posting saying a "sister" of the Malik Suicidal Brigade had carried out the successful mission.[136]

The first female suicide attack of the insurgency was followed closely by a female suicide car bombing. On October 11, 2005, a female suicide bomber detonated her car near a group of U.S. soldiers on patrol in Mosul. The only other known incident of a

female suicide car bomber occurred in Haditha in April 2003 when two women, acting on the orders of officials in Saddam Hussein's regime, killed three U.S. soldiers.[137]

In response to the bombing in Tal Afar, the regional police chief, General Ahmed Mohammed Khalaf, issued the following statement:

> Today's attack seems to represent a new tactic by the insurgents to use women, who are rarely searched at the Tal Afar checkpoints because of religious and social traditions that grant women special treatment.

Because of the bombing, General Khalaf said women and children would now be searched "in the same manner as men."[138] Cultural and religious barriers have made any interaction between U.S. forces and Iraqi women difficult in the past. Following the attacks, the Ministry of Defense announced there would be no new security measures other than "being more aware that females as well as men can be suicide bombers."[139]

The most well-known Iraqi female suicide bomber was Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi, a 35-year-old mother of four from Ramadi, who was to have been the fourth suicide bomber of the November 9 hotel attacks in Amman. Rishawi fled the Radisson hotel after her husband detonated his explosives and her own failed to go off. She was picked up by Jordanian police three days later and made a televised statement that was subsequently aired around the world.

Hussein al-Dulaimi, a cousin of Rishawi, believes she was motivated by anger and humiliation. Three of her brothers were killed by U.S. forces in Iraq. According to Dulaimi, the family was often harassed by U.S. troops:

> In one incident, Sajida's house was raided, and an American soldier put his boot on the head of Sajida's husband . . . that made her very angry, as this was a big insult against her and her husband.[140]

Rishawi's case is unusual in that it is believed to be the first case of husband and wife suicide bombers.

In late November, reports surfaced that a European woman had been involved in a suicide attack in Iraq. Iraqi officials believe a Belgian woman who had converted to Islam after marrying a radical Muslim carried out a November 9 attack on a U.S. military convoy in Baghdad. The woman, identified as Muriel Degauque, was the only fatality in the attack; she had traveled to Iraq to carry out jihad with her husband.[141] The case was the first instance of a European female suicide bomber.

On December 6, 2005, two female suicide bombers blew themselves up at Baghdad's police academy, killing at least 43 people and wounding more than 70. The attack was the deadliest against Iraqi security forces since February 28, 2005. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack.[142]

After the December election and in early 2006, suicide bombings continued to target predominately Shi'ite civilians and Iraqi police forces. Although consistent, the December bombings were not particularly deadly. On December 18 in eastern Baghdad, a suicide bomber killed a police officer and injured two others. On December 22, a suicide car bomb in Iskandariyah wounded seven policemen. The following day, in Balad, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a mosque, killing four people.

The next day, a suicide car bomber targeting two Iraq army vehicles in Baghdad killed five soldiers and wounded seven others, including several police officers. On December 29, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near the Interior Ministry in Baghdad, killing four policemen and wounding five.

In the span of eight days in early January, several suicide bombings targeting police recruits and Shi'ites killed almost 180 people. On January 3, 2006, a suicide car bomber attacked a bus carrying police officers in Baquba, killing 3 and wounding 14. The following day, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a funeral in Miqdadiya, killing 37 Shi'ite mourners and wounding 45 others. On January 5 in Karbala, a suicide bomber struck outside the Imam Hussein shrine, killing more than 49 Shi'ites. The same day a suicide bomber targeting a police recruitment center in Ramadi killed more than 50 and wounded as many as 60 others.

On January 6, 2006, a suicide car bomb targeting a police checkpoint in the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Zafaraniya killed one police commando and injured three. Later, in Mosul, a suicide car bomber struck a police patrol, wounding 11 people, including 4 policemen. On January 9, two suicide bombers carrying police identity cards and dressed in police uniforms walked up to the Interior Ministry compound on Monday morning and blew themselves up hundreds of yards from a ceremony attended by the American ambassador, killing 29 Iraqis. On January 19, a suicide attacker detonated an explosive vest in a crowded downtown coffee shop, killing 16 and wounding 21.

In early April, three suicide bombers targeted the Baratha mosque in Baghdad, a primary headquarters for SCIRI, killing 79 and wounding more than 140. At least two of the bombers were dressed as women to hide the bombs; they slipped into the mosque as the worshippers left. The first bomb detonated at the main exit, and the second detonated inside the mosque as people rushed back in for safety. Ten seconds later, the third bomb exploded.[143] The day prior, a car bomb killed ten at the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf.

September 2006 was another month with numerous mass bombings, and Iraqi civilians bore the brunt of the casualties.

- September 13, 2006: A bomb kills at least 19 people and wounds more than 62 after it detonated in a large square used mostly as a parking lot near the main headquarters of Baghdad's traffic police department.
- September 14, 2006: A car bomb blows up near the government's passport office in central Baghdad, killing 9 people and wounding 17.
- September 17, 2006: Suicide bombers explode five vehicles in Kirkuk, killing more than two dozen and wounding over 100. The deadliest of the bombs is detonated outside the Kirkuk Police Department's Bureau of Major Crimes, located between the offices of two Kurdish political parties, vividly depicting rising tensions between Kurds and Arabs for control of the city. Other targets include a private security firm, a police checkpoint, and the house of a Sunni sheik.
- September 18, 2006: A suicide bomber kills at least 23 people and wounds 17 others in an open-air market in the northwestern city of Tal Afar.
- September 19, 2006: A car bomb explodes near a gas station, killing 15 people and wounding more than 50.

- September 23, 2006: A bomb claimed by a Sunni Arab extremist group, Jamaat Jund al-Sahaba Soldiers of the Prophet's Companions, kills at least 37 Shi'ites in Baghdad as they stock up on fuel for Ramadan.

  This pace of mass bombings continued through the rest of 2006 and into 2007.
- October 4, 2006: At least 14 people are killed and 75 are wounded in a car bomb attack on the convoy of Iraq's industry minister. Minister Fawzi al-Hariri, a Kurd, was not in the convoy when it was attacked in central Baghdad.
- October 30, 2006: A roadside bomb in Sadr City kills 28 and wounds 60.
- November 23, 2006: One of the largest attacks since the war began occurred in Sadr City, Baghdad. A series of five car bombs and mortar attacks kills between 200 and 250 people and wounds the same number. Baghdad declares a curfew, and U.S. and Iraqi forces cordon off the Shi'ite district.
- December 2, 2006: Another mass bombing of a Shi'ite area in Baghdad takes place, threatening to spark a new series of reprisal attacks. In Baghdad, two car bombs explode in the market area of Sadriya and one in the market at Hafidh Qadhi, about 100 yards away. Three mortar attacks follow soon afterward in the same areas. The attacks kill more than 60 and wound close to 100.
- February 4, 2007: A suicide bomber drives a truck laden with explosives into a Shi'ite market in Baghdad, killing 150 and wounding 300, making it the most deadly single attack of the war.

- **Use foreign Islamist volunteers as cannon fodder; put "paid" and low-value Iraqi insurgents in high-risk positions:** Both Islamist extremist cells and more nationalist cells and groups learned to exploit young men recruited from outside Iraq as "Islamic martyrs" in suicide bombings and other high-risk missions. They developed foreign recruiting networks, often staging such volunteers through Syria and Jordan, indoctrinating them, and then using them ruthlessly. Alternatively, groups and cells learned to isolate their leaders, financiers, and experts from high-risk and front-line missions, sending in inexperienced and junior personnel to take risks—sometimes young Iraqis paid token fees for risking the actual attack. In at least some cases, Iraqis were sent out to conduct high-risk conventional attacks where the planner must have known they had little or no chance of survival.
- **Stay behinds, diehards, and suicide squads:** During and after the battle for Fallujah, insurgents increasingly had teams stay behind that seemed to have been prepared to die or to seek martyrdom. Many were Iraqis. Their willingness to defend a building or small area with suicidal determination and no regard for retreat often inflicted higher casualties on MNF-I and Iraqi forces.
- **Mix crude and steadily more sophisticated IEDs:** Iraq is not the first war to make extensive use of IEDs. The British encountered over 7,000 IEDs during more than 30 years of fighting in Northern Ireland.[144] Hezbollah perfected the use of explosives in well-structured ambushes of Israeli forces, and the Afghans used road bombs extensively against the Soviets. As the previous chapters have shown, however, Iraq has provided a unique opportunity for insurgents and Islamist extremists to make extensive use of IEDs and VBIEDs.

  They have been able to exploit the massive stocks of arms and munitions left over after the fall of Saddam Hussein in more than 400 major arms dumps—most of which

were left without any guards from Saddam's fall through 2003 and much of 2004. For example, nearly 400 tons of HMX and RDX plastic explosive disappeared from the Qaqaa weapons facility alone in the first few months following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

These stocks were so vast that the average monthly number of attacks rose from zero after Saddam's fall to 450–500 by the end of 2003, rose to 600–700 by the end of 2004, around 1,400 by the end of 2005, and then remained at over 2,500 from mid-2006 through September 2007.[145]

Iraqi insurgents and militias soon combined an extensive use of low-grade IEDs, more carefully targeted sophisticated IEDs, very large car bombs, and other devices to create a mix of threats and methods that is much more difficult to counter than reliance on more consistent types of bombs and target sets.[146]

The insurgents based many of their initial efforts on relatively simple IED designs, some of which seem to have been adapted from the Arabic translations of U.S. field manuals on booby traps and similar improvised devices. The insurgents soon learned, however, to use more sophisticated detonators and triggering systems to counter U.S. electronic countermeasures and increase their distance away from the bomb.

By 2004, their triggering devices involved a mix of crude mechanical timers; pressure switches; cell phone, car key, garage door, and other short-range radio control devices; infrared data links and motion detectors; and more sophisticated long-range radio devices. As the Coalition responded with better detectors and various jamming devices, the insurgents developed better hand-detonated controls, pressure switches, and infrared triggering devices.

According to one report, only 10 percent of the IEDs used in Iraq as of May 2005 were modeled on the crude pressure-detonation devices shown in U.S. Army Field Manual 5-31 and in a direct Iraqi translation published in 1987.[147] Triggers for IED devices grew more sophisticated as well. One IED found by soldiers was connected by a wire to a long-range transmitter on top of a telephone poll. Insurgents incorporated new technology with pressure-plated IEDs that were triggered only by tracked vehicles. One soldier remarked about the adaptation of insurgent forces and the use of new technology saying, "I didn't see that when I first came in."[148]

The actual explosive devices in the IEDs came to include two key killing devices. These two methods of attack had caused some 70 percent of the U.S. troops killed in Iraq as of September 2007.[149]

The first device included large-stacked mixes of munitions—like several bombs or artillery shells—that were buried deep underneath a road. These were so large that they could destroy any U.S. armored vehicles, including the M1-A1 main battle tank. These large, buried IEDs became a key method of attack by August 2005 and forced the United States to develop and deploy a whole new generation of armored vehicles called Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. These had V-shaped armored bottom hulls that deflected the blast away from the bottom of the vehicle and sometimes allowed it to survive.

The second type of explosive device was a form of shaped charge that was called EFP (explosively formed projectile). EFPs could penetrate all but the heaviest armor in main battle tanks, and all the armor of other armored fighting vehicles, and uparmored lighter vehicles from the side. The first clear use of such a device was in Basra on May 15, 2004.[150] EFPs became a common mode of attacks by mid-2005, and the use of

improved Iranian-made components steadily increased their lethality in 2006 and 2007.[151]

EFPs used carefully machined copper or aluminum concave disks—largely copper—that were milled or punched with a 20-ton hydraulic press. The resulting disk had a 140-degree angle in its concave surface and was 2 to 11 inches in diameter. The disk and the explosive behind the disk were contained in a metal tube. When it was set off, the explosion transformed the metal disk into a tadpole-shaped slug moving at 2,000 meters per second, and this slug of molten metal could punch through several inches of armor at distances of 5 to 10 meters.

One or more EFPs could be triggered by a simple motion detector, commonly passive infrared systems. They could be remotely armed to ensure they attacked a military target and/or use interval timers set to hit any given sequence of vehicles passing in a convoy. They also could be clustered to fire several EFP weapons at the same time.[152]

Insurgents also incorporated the use of IEDs into the tactic of follow-on attacks or ambushes. This allowed insurgents to target support vehicles that arrive on the scene of an attack, once an initial IED has gone off. Lt. Col. Ross Brown described one such experience: "I brought in vehicles to support them [the patrol] and they hit four more IEDs. These were 250-pound aircraft bombs buried in the dirt. It was an IED ambush."[153] Once several vehicles were disabled, insurgents then attacked the convoys using small-arms and mortar fire.

By the summer of 2005, insurgents were carrying out an average of 65 IED attacks a day. Many were detected and defeated, but their use of shaped charges had become more sophisticated, using technology first developed by the Lebanese Hezbollah. In addition, the insurgents had learned to cluster and stack antitank mines and use brute force IEDs like adapted 500-pound bombs.[154] They also learned the vulnerabilities of U.S. and Coalition armored vehicles and which held the most troops and crew. They learned more about the probable routes Coalition and Iraq forces would have to take, and which kind of attacks would do the most to disrupt a given movement.

Insurgent organizations improved their organization for making, implanting, and triggering IEDs to the point where key personnel directing operations, financing them, and providing technical support were far less active in the field, and more and more use was made of foreign volunteers, quickly recruited Iraqis, and Iraqis paid small sums to do part of the work in implanting IEDs.

Small, mostly independent cells—and there were at least 160 by the fall of 2005—came to carry out most operations. This ensured that operations were hard to detect and penetrate, making it difficult to roll up an organization by catching men in the field or interrogating members of any one cell.[155]

In some cases, holes and locations for IEDs were prepared by one small team—sometimes using vehicles with holes cut in the bottom to defeat visual detection. A different team might cruise through an area and plant an IED on a target quickly on the basis of opportunity to defeat surveillance and patrols. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq and Ansaar al Islam became particularly skilled in such operations. In short, the insurgents advanced both their IED technology and tactics in tandem.[156]

IED "teams" also frequently delegated three roles to its members: a lookout, a triggerman, and an emplacer. These cells often sometimes included a rifleman to distract the gunners in the American vehicle while the triggerman detonated the IED device. The emplacer became one of the most valuable members as this job not only

was a high-risk position, but it required considerable experience to place the IED in ways that caused increased damage and casualties.[157]

The insurgents paid close attention to U.S. intelligence collection methods and counter-IED operations and changed their behavior accordingly. They used improved methods of concealment such as digging holes in a road and then "paving over" the hole. Other methods have included stealing police, military, and government vehicles, along with uniforms and IDs to penetrate into secure areas, and linking bombings to ambushes with rifles and RPGs—or additional IEDs—to attack the response force. As Coalition troops became more adept at uncovering IED factories and storage area, insurgents became more systematic with their construction and supply system. IEDs were often built in factories in the small villages around Baghdad and then smuggled into the city to a few suppliers who then sold them to insurgents. Insurgents also turned to car dealerships to store munitions and IEDs instead of houses, making transportation easier.[158]

The United States had some success with technical solutions, although the best solution was to hunt down and kill or capture the members of the IED cells. A 140-person Pentagon task force began working on ways to combat the roadside bombings in mid-2004, but the use of IEDs continued to escalate in spite of U.S. countermeasures. In September 2004, Gen. Richard Cody, the U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff, stated that some 500–600 IEDs were going off each month, and roughly half either harmed U.S. personnel or damaged U.S. vehicles.[159] While Coalition forces reported finding some 30–40 percent of IEDs, and rendering them safe, by May 2005, they also reported that the number of IED incidents had steadily climbed to some 30 per day.

These efforts did not stop the killing. IEDs accounted for 189 of 720 U.S. combat deaths in 2004—about 26 percent. Deaths caused by IEDs rose by more than 41 percent during the first five months of 2005, compared with a similar period in 2004, and accounted for 51 percent of the 255 combat deaths as of June 9, 2005. There were 85 deaths attributed to IEDs in the first five months of 2004, and 120 in 2005. This was a primary reason that the number of up-armored Humvees in U.S. forces rose from around 200 in the summer of 2004 to 9,000 in June 2005.[160]

The total number of IED attacks nearly doubled from 5,607 in 2004 to 10,953 in 2005. While the success rate of IED attacks dropped significantly, from 25–30 percent in 2004 to 10 percent in 2005, they still had a major impact. During 2005, there were 415 IED deaths out of a total of 674 combat deaths, or 61.6 percent of all combat deaths. IEDs accounted for 4,256 wounded out of a total of 5,941, some 71.6 percent of the wounded. From July 2005 to January 2006, IEDs killed 234 U.S. service members out of a total of 369 total combat deaths, or 63.4 percent. They accounted for 2,314 wounded out of 2,980 total combat wounded, or 77.7 percent.

Lt. Gen. James T. Conway, Director of Operations in the U.S. Joint Staff, stated in May 2005 that a total of 70 percent of all Coalition casualties to date since the fall of Saddam Hussein had been caused by IEDs, an effort that had been so successful that the United States announced that even up-armored Humvees were unsafe in high-threat areas and were being replaced with heavily armored 5-ton "gun trucks."[161] The use of roadside bombs remained a major problem for U.S. and other Coalition forces.

The number of roadside bombs continued to increase in the fall of 2005, part of the larger wave of violence unleashed by insurgents in the run-up to the December 15

elections. The U.S. military reported that for September and October 2005, there were more than 2,000 roadside bombs. While IED attacks had numbered around 700 a month in the spring of 2004, there were 1,029 attacks in August, 1,044 in September, and 1,029 in October. Although both the Iraqi and U.S. security forces were becoming more adept at detecting the bombs, the insurgents were planting explosives in greater numbers than ever before.

The lethality and effectiveness of the devices that were successful also increased. In the six-month period between May and October 2005, more than 60 percent of all U.S. troop fatalities were caused by IEDs. Of the more than 569 attacks across Iraq that occurred during the last week of October, 40 percent involved improvised bombs. IED attacks for that period accounted for 64 percent of Coalition casualties and 37 percent of Iraqi security force casualties.[162]

According to Pentagon spokesman Lawrence Di Rita, IEDs posed a "tough" and evolving challenge because the problem that existed in 2004 was "a different IED problem than the IED problem that exists today."[163] In late fall 2005, the Pentagon announced that insurgents were using new triggers or sensors on the devices, but the Pentagon was unable to figure out where the new technology was coming from or how best to defeat it. Although most bombs were still believed to be coming from inside Iraq, the military said it had evidence that bombs and technology were entering Iraq from the outside. Iran, as discussed below, is the candidate most often suspected as the source of this new technology.

Similar trends continued in November. The United States suffered 40 deaths from IEDs, almost half of the total losses for the month. In December this number increased; 61 percent of all U.S. troop casualties were from IEDs. Near the end of January, the overall deaths caused by IEDs as a percentage of attacks on U.S. forces was down to just below 40 percent. Yet the United States suffered fewer overall casualties that month, 63, 9 of which came from helicopter crashes due to hostile fire or mechanical malfunctions.[164]

Brig. Gen. Joseph Votel, who then led the Pentagon's anti-IED effort, said in early November 2005 that IEDs "remain the only thing that we haven't solved, I think, in terms of the enemy capability to operate against us." Lt. Gen. James Conway, Operations Director of the Joint Staff, agreed, saying the U.S. military was placing a greater emphasis on IEDs "because it's the only tool the enemy really has left in order to be able to take us on and be able to really cause casualties."[165]

Gen. Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated the following at a press briefing in November:

> Between the increase in armor and the changes in tactics, techniques and procedures that we've employed, the number of attacks—IED attacks—that have [killed or wounded troops] has gone down . . . That said, there are more overall IED attacks by the insurgents, and we are working on that problem.[166]

From 2004 to 2006, the United States spent about $6.1 billion in an effort to "defeat" IEDs, not counting up-armoring of vehicles, the deployment of more heavy armor like tanks, and improvements in body armor. In 2006, the Pentagon's Joint IED Defeat Organization received an increase of $3.3 billion. Despite this investment, Maj. Randall Simmons, a Georgia National Guardsmen deployed in Iraq, said, "As we've

improved our armor, the enemy's improved his IEDs. They're bigger, and with better detonating mechanisms." Lt. Col. Bill Adamson, Operations Chief for the anti-IED campaign, agreed, saying, "They adapt more quickly than we procure technology."[167]

Although these advances in technology and changes in tactics lowered the casualty rate per IED attack in 2005, the attacks nearly doubled from 5,607 in 2004 to 10,953 in 2005.[168] The number of U.S. deaths as a result of IEDs also increased. By mid-2005, 40 U.S. soldiers per month on average, twice the rate of 12 months prior, were killed by IEDs.[169] The sheer number of IED incidents during this time period is illustrated by one 21-man IED response unit who encountered 2,178 incidents in seven months from the summer of 2005 to the winter of 2006. In March 2006, however, Pentagon spokesman Brian Whitman pointed to the fact that the casualty rate of IEDs is half of what it was the 18 months prior.[170] The summer of 2006, however, saw the largest number of IEDs being used up to that point in the war.[171]

In early October 2005, the British government announced that the recent increase in sophisticated roadside bombs in Iraq could be traced to Iran. During the summer of 2005 insurgents began using infrared "trip wires" rather than the less sophisticated remote-control devices to detonate IEDs. The technology was similar to that used by Hezbollah in Lebanon. While cautioning that they could not be sure about the level of official or unofficial Iranian involvement, Prime Minister Tony Blair told reporters that new explosive devices being used against Coalition troops in Iraq could nevertheless be traced "either to Iranian elements or to Hezbollah."[172] In January 2006, the British government issued a formal protest to Iran after similar electronically triggered devices were found in eastern Iraq.[173] A breakaway group from Moqtada al-Sadr's militia was believed to use the trip wires, as were Sunni insurgents.

In December 2005 the Department of Defense announced that two training centers would be opened in the United States to help teach soldiers how to detect and disarm IEDs. Previously, soldiers had received IED training only upon their arrival in Iraq. The headquarters of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Task Force would be located at Fort Irwin, California. A second training facility would open in January 2005 at Elgin Air Force Base in Florida. Together, the centers will teach soldiers how to use robotics and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) as well as other technology to combat the IEDs. Speaking about the centers, Lt. Col. Thomas Magness said, "We've got to help these guys before they deploy. . . the threat evolves every day. This is an enemy that has demonstrated that they're going to change."[174]

U.S. efforts to combat the effectiveness of the IEDs and find them before they detonate continued to have mixed success in 2006. Jammers used by U.S. troops to prevent insurgents from detonating IEDs with cell phones or garage-door openers often interfered with U.S. radio signals, causing troops to turn off the jammers when they used their radios.[175] And newer infrared triggers cannot be blocked by electronic countermeasures, such as devices that jam signals sent from cell phones and remote-control devices used to detonate the bombs.[176] U.S. troops also encountered low-level-technology bombs that they called "speed bumps." The rudimentary IEDs were sandwiched between household items—such as plates or baking sheets—and hidden in dirt roads.

Not every report of improvements in IEDs was real. Pentagon officials asserted in early January 2006 that insurgents had developed "jumping" IEDs and were using them to attack low-flying Coalition helicopters. These claims were retracted later in the

month when the Department of Defense released a statement indicating that it did not know of any incidences of this nature.[177]

IEDs continued to be the primary cause of death for U.S. troops in Iraq in spite of all of these measures. IEDs had caused 900 deaths out of a total of 1,748 combat deaths, or 51.5 percent during the entire post-Saddam fall from March 2003 to January 2006. IEDs caused 9,327 wounded out of a total of 16,606 or 56.2 percent.[178] However, the numbers of personnel killed and wounded by IEDs was scarcely the only measure of insurgent success. Casualties may have dropped, but the number of attacks went up. IED attacks tie down manpower and equipment, disrupt operations, disrupt economic and aid activity, and interact with attacks on Iraqi civilians and forces to limit political progress and help try to provoke civil war.

The U.S. military did continue to improve its capability to find and defuse IEDs in 2006 and 2007. The Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) stated that by early 2007, U.S. troops were finding and clearing roughly half of all IEDs. The numbers of IEDs defused had increased five- or sixfold since 2004, according to the JIEDDO. Further, the number of IEDs doubled in 2006, but less than 10 percent caused casualties, which the JIEDDO attributed to better jamming devises and improved vehicle armor.[179]

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates stated that IEDs caused 70 percent of deaths and wounds by 2007. Through the end of January 2007, 1,337 U.S. troops had been killed by IEDs and 11,871 had been wounded.[180] To combat these problems, the U.S. military invested $9.4 billion to buy armored vehicles with V-shaped hulls that defused the blast from the bombs.

In spite of the "surge," the number of IED attacks had doubled from 50 per day in January 2006 to 100 per day in much of 2007, and the total number in March 2007 rose to 3,229—rising above 3,000 for the first time in the war. The fees various insurgent groups paid for emplacing IEDs also tended to drop in spite of Coalition patrols and technology—going from around $300 early in the fighting to as low as $25 in 2007.[181]

In September 2007, MNF-I estimated that there had been more than 81,000 IED attacks of various kinds since the fall of Saddam Hussein, including 25,000 in the first nine months of 2007. It reported that these attacks had caused almost two-thirds of the 3,100 U.S. troops killed in combat since May 2003, and a higher percentage of combat wounds—a total of some 21,200 American wounded as of September 22, 2007.[182]

Similar data are not available on the overall pattern of Iraqi casualties, a larger percent of whom seem to have been hit by suicide bombers and in ambushes, but MNF-I estimated that some 600 Iraqi security forces and 11,000 Iraqi civilians were killed by IEDs in the first nine months of 2007.[183] As the past chapters have shown, there were many effective attacks. For example, 3 Iraqi soldiers were killed and 44 were wounded in a single VBIED bomb attack on their bus on April 6, 2005.[184] Iraqi military personnel, security personnel, and police are particularly vulnerable because they have little or no armor and often must move into insecure facilities or go on leave in unprotected vehicles simply to perform routine tasks like bringing money to their families in a cash-in-hand economy.

There are no precise estimates of the overall cost of the U.S. counter-IED effort, but it seems likely that the United States and its allies had spent well over $10 billion on

countermeasures, up-armoring vehicles, improving body armor, and employing new detection systems and devices like robots to disarm such weapons by September 2007, and at least another $8 billion to $12 billion worth of IED-related equipment and IED-resistant vehicles were on order.

These measures did reduce the number of casualties per device from one bomb per casualty in 2003 to four bombs per casualty in 2007, and the deployment of some 30,000 jammers led to a sharp reduction in the use of radio-controlled triggers from a majority of the devices in 2003–2004 to only 10 percent in 2007.[185] The fact remains, however, that the costs to the insurgents to find countermeasures to U.S. and allied actions were negligible by comparison, and the countermeasures could easily be disseminated in the form of manuals and illustrated "how to" works available on the Internet. They had found an effective substitute for artillery, precision-guided weapons, and antitank-guided missiles that could be delivered at almost no cost, required only limited imports if any, and was far less detectable than any form of direct attack.[186]

U.S. military planners estimate that IEDs will be a major problem for U.S. forces for years to come, and not just in Iraq. Between October 7, 2001, and September 22, 2007, 251 U.S. troops were killed in Afghanistan; of these 103 (41 percent) were killed by IEDs. The United States had a total of 1,607 wounded; of these 848 (53 percent) were caused by IEDs. These figures compare with a total of 3,092 killed in combat in Iraq between March 19, 2003, and September 22, 2007, of which 1,952 (63 percent) were killed by IEDs. The United States had a total of 28,009 wounded during the same period; 19,248 (69 percent) were caused by IEDs.

Some experts believe that improvised bombs could become the weapon of choice in future insurgencies and guerrilla wars. It should be noted, however, that IEDs might be only one such threat. The Russians faced major problems from modern man-portable short-range air-defense missiles in the Afghan War. The Israeli Defense Forces faced advanced antitank-guided weapons and modern man-portable short-range air-defense missiles in Lebanon in 2006, as well as a continuing IED threat. They also faced improving short-range rockets, a threat that grew more serious in Iraq in 2007. IEDs are only one possible "force multiplier" that light forces and asymmetric threats can use.

- **Adapt IED technology and tactics to match updates in Coalition defense capabilities:** Despite technological advances and changes in tactics by the U.S. military, insurgents continued to remain one step ahead. The summer of 2005 brought an increase in "shaped-charge" explosives, the use of sophisticated infrared (IR) motion detectors to fire them as targets passed by, and new radio-controlled triggers with enough range and power to work from outside the range of the Coalition's ECM (electronic countermeasures) bubble.

  The number of American troops killed by IEDs spiked during the summer, with 35 deaths in May, 36 in June, and 39 in July.[187] Another adaptation that has increased the lethality of insurgent IED attacks was the increased size of the weapons, a response to the up-armoring of U.S. vehicles. Initially, IEDs in Iraq were small charges composed of single 60-mm and 81-mm mortars. Insurgents have since increased the size to 122 mm and 152 mm and begun to use buried 500- and 1,000-lb airplane bombs to affect an explosive upward force that can render current up-armoring useless.[188] The 39 deaths by bombing in July 2005 was the largest-to-date monthly toll since the war began.

- **Increase the size and power of IEDs to nullify the advantages of U.S. and Coalition armor, use shaped charges, and find countermeasures to U.S. jamming and other countermeasures:** In two separate instances in early January 2005, IEDs destroyed a Bradley Fighting Vehicle and an Abrams tank. The two vehicles were among the more heavily armored vehicles in the U.S. arsenal. Prior to the two bombings, both the Abrams and the Bradley Fighting Vehicle had proven relatively effective in protecting troops inside.

  More generally, insurgents learned to use vehicles with holes drilled in their floors to rapidly dig holes and emplace IEDs only when they know convoys are on the way. They learned that simple radio-control devices like garage-door openers and cell phones are detectable and jammable. They have imported more sophisticated trigger devices, armed IEDS before convoys or vehicles are in line of sight, and used IR motion detectors and trip wires to detonate the IEDs when they were not present to be counterattacked. Alternatively, they learned to use more than one IED, fire additional weapons after vehicles have halted to deal with the first attack, and sometimes "swarm" the vehicles under attack with rapid strikes using RPGs and automatic weapons. These attacks became more lethal as insurgent fire became more accurate, and they learned to strike at vulnerable points in armored and up-armored vehicles (such as the windows of up-armored Humvees.)

  Simple camouflage methods were effective as well. Insurgents used animal carcasses to hide IEDs, disguised them as rocks, or painted them with plaster to resemble a piece of concrete. They were also hidden in objects such as donkey carts, paint cans, trash bags, and plastic bottles.[189] There were also reports of an IED found hidden inside the sleeve to an MRE package and a human leg armed with a pressure-switch bomb set to go off when it was picked up.[190]

  In Ramadi, insurgents set up mannequins armed with explosive devices hoping either that soldiers would think they were corpses and stop to check them or just simply to distract soldiers making them more vulnerable to attack.[191]

  U.S. soldiers also reported IEDs being laid in stages. One day a seemingly harmless piece of trash would be dropped on the ground, the next day explosives would be planted in it, and the following day it would be armed. There were also reports of children as young as 12 or 13 years old emplacing IEDs.[192]

  Insurgents started using smaller devices in Baghdad, about the size of a coffee can, that were easier to place in a city atmosphere. They were not capable of destroying Humvees, but were difficult to see and could wound or kill soldiers. The U.S. military also said that they were impossible to jam.[193]

  In late 2006 and 2007, British and U.S. military spokesmen reported that EFP bombs were increasingly found in Iraq. EFPs were made from a pipe filled with explosives and capped by a copper disk. When the explosives detonated, they transformed the disk into a molten metal capable of penetrating armor. Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno said that EFPs were being supplied by Iran.[194]

- **Attack convoys to force the United States and the Coalition to defend logistics and supply operations, hit a more vulnerable target, and disrupt U.S. operations:** The GAO reported in February 2006 that "the security environment in Iraq has led to severe restrictions on the movement of civilian staff around the country and reductions of a US presence at reconstruction sites," according to U.S. agency officials and contractors.

For example, the Project Contracting Office reported in February 2006 that the number of attacks on convoys and casualties had increased from 20 convoys attacked and 11 casualties in October 2005 to 33 convoys attacked and 34 casualties in January 2006. In another example, work at a wastewater plant in central Iraq was halted for approximately two months in early 2005 because insurgent threats drove away subcontractors and made the work too hazardous to perform.

U.S.–funded grantees and contractors also faced security restrictions that hampered their movements and limited the scope of their work. For example, IFES was not able to send its advisors to most of the governorate-level elections administration offices, which hampered training and operations at those facilities leading up to Iraq's Election Day on January 30, 2005.[195]

- **Specialize and compartmentalize operations, use isolation, affiliation, and "swarming":** Insurgent groups learned to create structures where leadership cadres were almost totally isolated from operations and communication, allowing them to focus on providing broad guidance and the propaganda and media struggle. Finance, planning, armorer, and pert operational groups similarly isolated and physically separated from the leadership and each other. Specialized groups were created in larger organizations for IED operations, assassinations, even strikes focused on specialized groups like Shi'ite clergy. Other cells focused solely on surveillance, reconnaissance, transportation, and safe houses.[196] Suicide bomber groups were kept separate from those planning and arming the attacks and treated as expendable. Low-level and low-value cadres were expended in defensive operations or attacks, while higher-value cadres dispersed and sought to survive. Paid elements were used to avoid loss of cadre personnel.

  Cell structures were deliberately kept loose, and direct command and communication were minimized. Mission tasking replaced the kind of direct tasking and communication that the Coalition and Iraqi forces might have detected. Affiliated groups and different mixes of cells may be brought in to "swarm" a given target or support a given operation, but the proliferation of different groups and elements helped ensure the survival of all insurgent groups by making it impossible to target a given set of cells and leaders.

  What the military calls "low-level" insurgent cells operated and attacked in a specific region. But other larger and more hierarchical groups, many made up of former Iraqi military and intelligence officers, covered wider areas and could organize larger attacks. There was evidence that the insurgency was increasingly able to conduct complex attacks. For example, on January 24, 2006, in Ramadi, it took the combined forces of U.S. Marines working with Iraqi troops and supported by attack aircraft to defeat a series of coordinated insurgent attacks in broad daylight. The insurgents used weapons including mortars, small arms, and RPGs.[197]

  One such insurgent network, the Islamic Patriotism Movement, numbered about 55 fighters and was associated with the larger Secret Islamic Army. Led by a former Iraqi intelligence officer named Abu Omar, known as the group's emir, he assigned operations and planning to his lieutenants, many who were former Republican Guard members. Each cell leader then had three to four cells consisting of three to four men apiece. Each man had a specific function: kidnapping; IEDs; support; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.[198]

  The insurgents also used their own version of "swarming." They used media coverage, key calendar events, and other forms of "open-source" targeting and reporting on the effectiveness and the impact of given attacks to know which strike had high profile, what

methods of attack worked, and the media and military impacts of their actions. The proliferation of groups and cells, attack somewhat at random, but against high-value targets in a given place or time, of a given type, or simply in a constant stream of diverse attacks, removed the need for coordination and complex command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence/battlefield management (C^4I/BM) operations and allowed a slow and uncoordinated tempo of operations to be effective.

- **Use swarming techniques for attacks on vehicles:** The quality of urban and road ambushes improved strikingly in Iraq, as did the ability to set up rapid attacks and exploit the vulnerability of soft-skinned vehicles. Insurgents also learned to swarm Coalition forces by rushing in from different points or firing simultaneously from multiple locations. In some cases, a single vehicle could take eight RPG rounds in a short encounter. Particularly in built-up areas, these tactics could kill or disable even heavy armor like the Abrams tank, and they posed a major threat to lighter armored vehicles, as well as exposed infantry.
- **Use mixed attacks and sequential ambushes to attack military and emergency forces in follow-on attacks:** Iraqi insurgents steadily improved their ability to carry out complex attacks where an IED might be set off and then either more IEDs or other methods of attack would be used against rescuers and follow-on forces. Alternatively, an ambush might be used to lead U.S. and Iraqi forces into an area with IEDs.

  By the spring of 2005, insurgents increasingly used such mixed attacks to strike at U.S. facilities. For example, they used a mix of gunmen, suicide car bombs, and a large fire truck filled with explosives to attack a U.S. Marine base at Camp Gannon at Husaybah near the Syrian border on April 11, 2005.[199] On May 9, 2005, they used a hospital at Haditha as an ambush point and then attacked the U.S. forces that responded with suicide bombs once they entered. This mix of unpredictable attacks, many slowly built up in ways difficult for U.S. intelligence methods to detect, has greatly complicated the operations of U.S. and Iraq forces, although scarcely defeated them.

  After 2005, IEDs were increasingly used to initiate an attack at a preselected location and were often followed on by small-arms fire, mortar attacks, or more IED explosions as reinforcements attempted to arrive.[200] On April 2, an attack on Abu Ghraib was initiated with multiple car bombs against the entrance gates and then followed by mortar fire, rocket-propelled grenades, and small-arms fire, which forced the Marines to abandon their positions. Reinforcements were struck by multiple IEDs on their way to the scene and encountered small-arms fire. According to intelligence analysts, 12 coordinated attacks took place in under 30 minutes.[201]

  On June 20, an Army patrol interrupted a group of insurgents with more than 100 fighters who were assembling mortars and machine guns for what appeared to be a large-scale attack against a commando compound. In the large-scale chase that ensued, insurgents managed to detonate one suicide car bomb and a second went off as a result of the gunfire. IEDs and car bombs struck arriving reinforcements who then came under fire from nearby rooftops.[202]

  One intelligence officer with the 3rd Infantry Division characterized these attacks as "complex, professional-style attacks, militarily thought out, planned and resourced operations."[203]

  A large-scale assault on an Iraqi prison in March 2006 using combined arms was an example of simple but effective planning and coordination among insurgents. Nearly 100 insurgents armed with automatic rifles and RPGs stormed a jail in north Baghdad,

killing 20 police and a courthouse guard in a prison break that freed 33 prisoners, 18 of whom had been captured in police raids just two days earlier. The assault left 10 attackers dead. They cut the telephone wires before they entered to prevent the police from calling for backup and detonated a series of roadside bombs as they fled to prevent a chase.[204]

The U.S. military announced in September 2006 that insurgents were using a new tactic of detonating smaller bombs and subsequently detonating larger explosions when civilians and police arrived at the scene.[205]

- **Exploit the weaknesses in U.S., Coalition, and Iraqi combat and logistic vehicles:** The insurgents learned early on to target unarmored and lightly armored vehicles and to hit at their weakest points. Deliberately or not, they learned that this forced the United States to use steadily heavier armor, disperse forces to protect most movements, and pay the cost of up-armoring and up-arming everything from trucks and Humvees to armored fighting vehicles like the Stryker. At the same time, insurgents learned how to place IEDs where they could kill many armored vehicles from below—where their armor was lighter or less effective, and to use detonating devices that allowed remote triggering as armored vehicles passed above an IED or group of antitank mines.
- **Develop complex mixes and ambushes using small arms and light weapons like automatic weapons, RPGs, and mortars:** Through the spring of 2005, insurgents did not make effective use of looted guided antitank weapons and had been able to down only one aircraft with man-portable surface-to-air missiles (MANPADS).[206] They did, however, steadily improve their tactics from single fire ambushes to multiple firings of RPGs against the same target, mixes of firing positions, and sequential fire points, ambushes, and defenses—mixing small arms, RPGs, and light automatic weapons.

  From 2006 onward, insurgents made more effective use of surface-to-air missiles and mortars. Mortar rounds became a common weapon of choice in the sectarian conflict of the "war after the war." As neighborhoods segregated into sectarian enclaves, neighborhood armed groups used mortar rounds to attack surrounding areas held by other ethnic groups. Particularly in west Baghdad where Sunni armed groups—some with ties to the insurgency—and Shi'ite militias were fighting for control of mixed neighborhoods, mortars inflicted serious casualties. Shi'ite militias, in particular, used mortar attacks to retaliate against suicide bombings that occurred regularly in Shi'ite districts.

  Insurgents also used surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) such as the Russian-made SA-7 Grail to bring down several U.S. Apache helicopters. One insurgent group with ties to Syrian intelligence was believed to have more than a dozen of these missiles. It was unclear where the SAMs originated.[207]
- **Import small "force multipliers":** Rather than smuggle large numbers of arms and create highly visible lines of supply, the insurgents imported devices like night vision systems, commercial communications, sniper rifles, and new forms of more sophisticated detonators.
- **Make effective use of snipers:** Iraqi insurgents initially had poor marksmanship and tended to fire off their weapons in sustained and poorly armed bursts. With time, however, some groups and cells not only developed effective snipers, but trained spotters, learned how to position and mix their snipers with other elements of Iraqi forces, and developed signals and other communications systems like them in tactical operations.

Overall fire discipline and marksmanship remained poor until the late spring of 2005, but sniper elements became steadily more effective, and the overall quality of insurgent fire discipline and marksmanship was generally no worse than that of Iraqi soldiers, security personnel, and police. Snipers acquired new types of rifles, antiarmor ammunition, and body armor from outside Iraq, indicating they might have both support and training from Islamist extremists. Islamist Web sites also began to include interactive sniper "training" data as a recruiting tool and crude training aid.[208]

Through November 2005, the Pentagon reported 2,100 American fatalities, 28 of which were killed by snipers.[209] According to John Morgan, a spokesperson for the U.S. forces in Iraq, combat troops will not always report sniper deaths in efforts to impede insurgents from learning that attacks succeeded.[210]

In late July 2006, U.S. military intelligence uncovered Iraqi insurgent training material online that outlined sniper techniques for targeting U.S. troops. The manual encouraged insurgents to aim for engineers, medics, and chaplains. According to the online document, "killing doctors and chaplains is suggested as a means of psychological warfare."[211] To most effectively obstruct U.S. military capabilities, the manual directed insurgents to target U.S. officers, tank drivers, and communications officers. Iraqi government forces were considered lower-priority targets that could be attacked by lower-grade combat brigades.[212]

In Baghdad, the steadily growing threat from Sunni and Shi'ite snipers prompted a U.S. response. An al-Qa'ida video in October 2006 showed two U.S. soldiers being shot by snipers. The footage was blurry, but the accuracy was obvious. The video was posted on a Web site used by the Mujahedeen Shura Council.[213] The U.S. military would not release data on sniper attacks at the time, but it was clear from news reports that there was an increased threat of snipers in Baghdad, and they were becoming more accurate.

The U.S. military also declared the Shi'ite-dominated area east of the Tigris a haven for sniper militiamen. A sniper shot a soldier as he traveled door-to-door talking with Iraqi civilians, trying to instill confidence in American forces. An intelligence officer operating next to Sadr City said, "It's on my mind when I leave the wire. Snipers create fear. That's the whole point of snipers. It's about stopping us from talking to the people." As a result of the increased sniper threat in the early fall, U.S. units began patrolling in Bradley vehicles rather than more vulnerable Humvees. Soldiers also learned to run through open areas and scan rooftops to avoid the more accurate gunmen.[214]

The U.S. military caught a sniper during an operation in late October. The man had a high-powered scope, a video camera, and a hole in the trunk of his car so he could target U.S. troops without being seen. To combat the sniper problem, the U.S. military deployed counter sniper teams to search for snipers in neighborhoods that the troops knew well.[215]

In early November 2006, the *New York Times* reported that the U.S. military had held an internal conference about the sniper problem, but there seemed to be no easy tactical answer. U.S. Marines in Anbar Province were struck by the sudden increased accuracy and frequency of sniper attacks. Marines noted that they rarely saw the elusive snipers and that most attacks seemed to come when the Marines were not engaged in active combat and from up to 300 yards away.

The *Times* article said that snipers often used long-barreled Dragunov rifles and hid on platforms, rooftops, and within cars. A general in Anbar said that insurgents began

creating sniper training camps in the fall of 2006. He said, "We heard from some of our sources that the insurgents were going around with loudspeakers, saying that if you want to be a sniper we will pay you three times what your salary is now." He also explained, "The sniper teams have a network of spotters, and that each time the marines leave their outpost, spotters hidden among the Iraqi population call the snipers and tell them where the marines are and what they are doing."

Most of the time snipers only took one shot, which allowed them to get away quickly. They also tended to target Marine radiomen. To combat the sniper problem, Marine units began limited foot patrols during the day, and if they did leave their vehicles, they tried to quickly step inside homes and buildings to talk with residents rather than standing on the street. Soldiers also walked in zigzag lines and moved their heads up and down. Troops continued to patrol streets on foot at night because sniper technology had not achieved precision in the dark.[216]

- **Target vulnerable targets, such as U.S. helicopters:** A Brookings estimate indicated that between 2003 and 2007 the United States lost less than 60 helicopters, while flying thousands of sorties a month. These losses also compared with some 5,000 helicopters lost in Vietnam, about two-fifths of which were combat losses.

  The cause of many of the crashes in Iraq was uncertain, and statistics on losses seemed to ignore helicopters forced down or that came under attack but did not crash. At worst, however, combat losses still seemed to be less than half of the total number of helicopters lost, and overall loss rates in Iraq were not yet radically higher than in demanding peacetime training programs.

  In the first several weeks of 2007, however, the United States lost six helicopters, causing some experts to state that insurgents had adopted a new tactic. However, in both January 2004 and February 2006 five helicopters were shot down. The insurgents did, however, in 2007 have good reason to find a new group of targets and helicopters were an attractive option. All of the insurgent groups were fully aware that the United States was increasingly vulnerable to attacks on its own forces, those of Iraq, and large, high-profile attacks on Iraqi civilians. The more media attention the insurgents could get through such attacks, the more likely it was that U.S. domestic politics would increase pressure for withdrawal from Iraq or place limits on the use of U.S. forces.

  If the insurgents did swarm around helicopters as a target, they also could use virtually any automatic weapon, man-portable surface-to-air missiles, and even RPGs. An ambush could simply consist of training insurgent troops to swarm their fire if a helicopter simply happened to fly by, or it could consist of a wide variety of planned efforts to prepare for an attack. In any case, the insurgent effort was limited and no new weapons were needed.

  Helicopters were also highly desirable tactical targets. They were the key to rapid and relatively secure movement of forces and personnel. IEDs made the roads unsafe for small, isolated movements and road movement took time. Moreover, it took large security forces to provide relative security for even a well-organized convoy.

  In early 2007, if the insurgents could limit helicopter use, or force a major addition in the U.S. security effort, they gained in military as well as political terms. They had already forced the United States into a vast military and contractor force protection and rear-area security effort.

  Attacking helicopters had other advantages. The helicopters had to fly long routes, which meant they could be attacked over wide areas, and insurgents could disperse to

limit their vulnerability to counterattack. The flight profiles, and helicopter speed and height, were predictable, but this was a war of attrition. Insurgents could simply wait anywhere in the normal flight area until a helicopter became easy to attack.

In many areas, the attacker did not have to be road bound, expanding the area that must be put under surveillance and/or protected. If the helicopter flew low, it could be hit by guns. If a chopper flew high, it became more vulnerable to light, man-portable surface-to-air missiles like the SA-7 or SA-14 and their far more sophisticated successors.

Attacking a helicopter as it came into or went out of a base or facility was also a way of bypassing its force protection while being able to place the attacker in areas where helicopters had more frequent ingress and egress, the attacker could hide in built-up areas, and counterattacks presented problems in terms of civilian casualties and collateral damage. While insurgents did not yet seem to have focused on this fact, such attacks were also a means of attacking contractor movements, since many contractors used their own or chartered helicopters and were less able to provide protection than U.S. forces.

Like IED attacks, suicide bombs, car bombs, and the increased use of snipers, helicopter attacks were yet another way of "stretching" the U.S. and Iraqi forces politically and militarily at the same time at very little cost and with little dedicated training. Simply attacking enough helicopters could cost the United States a great deal in terms of defensive effort even if successes were rare, and like IEDs, simple improvements in technology—like the import of SA-16s and other more sophisticated SHORADs—could challenge new U.S. defensive tactics and countermeasures.

To counter the helicopter attacks, the U.S. military imposed no-fly zones. Many of the no-fly zones were north of Baghdad, where most of the helicopters were shot down. U.S. pilots also started flying higher and at night. The new tactics seemed to be working; there were no new attacks on helicopters after February 23, 2007. But pilots also acknowledged that it was only a short-term solution and insurgents would soon figure out the new circuitous travel routes. U.S. pilots were expected to log 400,000 flight hours in 2007, up from 240,000 in 2005.[217]

- **Attack lines of communication (LOCs), rear area, and support activity:** Iraqi insurgents found that dispersed attacks on logistics and support forces often offered a higher chance of success than attacks on combat forces and defended sites, and made the Coalition fight wars based on "deep support" rather than "deep strikes" beyond the Forward Edge of Battle Areas (FEBA). In some cases, like the road from the Green Zone and central Baghdad to the airport, insurgents also chose routes that the Coalition and government forces could not avoid, where constant attacks both harassed operations and became a political statement and symbol of Iraq's lack of security. These "ambush alleys" allowed the insurgents to force a major Iraqi or MNF defensive effort at relatively little cost.
- **Strike at highly visible targets with critical economic and infrastructure visibility:** Water and power facilities have broad political, media, economic, and social impacts. Striking at critical export-earning facilities like Iraq's northern export pipeline from the Kirkuk oil fields to the IT-1A storage tanks near Beiji, where oil accumulates before it is pumped further north to Ceyhan, sharply affected the government's revenues, forced it to create special protection forces, and gained world attention.

Insurgents attacked infrastructure throughout the course of the war. As with Shi'ite militia tactics, the number of bombings or IED attacks by Sunni insurgents was only part of the larger and more important picture of control of political and economic space. The more unified insurgency and the "Islamic State" had the potential to gain the support of the broader Sunni community. Continued intimidation campaigns against Sunnis who complied with U.S. forces or the Shi'ite government and a lack of employment opportunities also maintained the undrainable swamp of young Sunni recruits. Moderate Sunnis increasingly saw the Shi'ite-led government as unwilling to compromise with Sunnis on any issues and, therefore, were swayed to give their economic and political support to the insurgency.

The insurgents tailored their economic attacks to encourage the conditions for civil war. In the last six months of 2006, for example, insurgents succeeded in their tactic of electrically isolating Baghdad, according to a *New York Times* report. Insurgents attacked towers in the deserts to the north and south of the capital, where they could easily kill repair crews. The attacks were particularly devastating because they brought almost all the power to Baghdad from the energy rich north and south. Looters also removed much of the valuable steel and aluminum from the towers and sold it on the black market—making repairs even more difficult.

Electricity officials said that in March 2006 only one or two lines were down, but by summer that number had risen to six or seven. The most devastating attack came on July 6 when insurgents targeted all the lines at the same time, and the government was unable to reverse the damage.

The typical strategy was to set off explosives at the four support points of a single tower, which would then pull down two or three more towers when it fell.[218] On December 17 insurgents downed 40 towers running into Baghdad from the power plant in Beiji and 42 more connecting Beiji to Kirkuk.

The Iraqi electricity minister said, "Now Baghdad is almost isolated. We almost don't have any power coming from outside." He stated that seven of nine lines supplying Baghdad were down due to insurgent attacks and lack of repairs. He also could not think of any cause in which the insurgents had been caught. The ministry had tried to make monetary arrangements with tribes in return for security of the lines, but they had all been ineffective.

Further, although insurgent attacks decreased on oil assets, attacks on pipelines and Oil Ministry personnel contributed—along with extreme corruption and the black market—to the failure of the Iraqi government to meet oil production goals. By the end of 2006, according to the Department of Defense "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report, insurgent attacks on infrastructure decreased to an average of one per week.

- **Kill Iraqi elites and "soft targets":** The insurgents found it was far easier to kill Iraqi officials and security personnel, and their family members, than Americans. They also found it was easier to kill mid-level officials than better-protected senior officials. In some areas, simply killing educated elites and/or their family members—doctors, professionals, etc.—could paralyze much of the nation-building process, create a broad climate of insecurity, and force the U.S. and Iraqi forces to disperse resources in defensive missions or simply have to stand aside and tolerate continued attacks.

  By the end of 2006, the civil conflict had all but eliminated the voices of moderation and conciliation in Iraq, including much of the professional and educated class. Attacks

against intellectuals increased dramatically in 2006 and numerous schools and universities were closed, contributing to a massive brain drain that would have deleterious consequences for Iraq in the future. The elimination of voice of moderation and educated elites left a void that was quickly filled by extremists on all sides and soft sectarian cleansing. Insurgent and militia attacks on soft targets pushed the country closer to full-scale civil war.

- **Target elections, the political process, and governance:** Elections and the local presence of government were soft, dispersed targets whose operation was critical to political legitimacy. Hitting these targets helped derail the political process, got media visibility, offered vulnerable targets, and intimidated the government and population in much wider areas than those subjected to direct attack.

  In the run-up to the October referendum, for example, insurgents intensified their attacks upon political and infrastructure targets. Insurgents bombed a number of party offices, including those of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Sunni Arab Iraqi Islamic Party. The latter was attacked after it urged its followers to vote in favor of the constitution.

  Despite predictions of major violence, there were relatively few attacks by insurgents on the actual day of the referendum. Across the country, more than 9 million Iraqis voted in 6,000 polling stations. Early estimates put voter turnout at 61 percent and only five of the capital's 1,200 polling stations were attacked. However, incidents still occurred in spite of a halt to nearly all movement by nonmilitary and nongovernmental vehicles and placing peak levels of Coalition and Iraqi security forces on duty.

  - In Ramadi, U.S. patrols clash with insurgents in the early morning hours. Also in Ramadi, a roadside bomb kills five U.S. soldiers and two Iraqi soldiers. Insurgents fire six mortar rounds at a sports hall being used as a polling center.
  - A roadside bomb in Saqlawiyah kills a U.S. Marine.
  - South of Basra, gunmen attack an empty polling station at 3 A.M., but are apprehended.
  - In Baquba, a roadside bomb strikes an Iraqi Army and police convoy on patrol, killing three soldiers and wounding another three.
  - In Baghdad, insurgents target five polling stations: A roadside bomb explodes near a school polling station in the Amiriyah neighborhood of western Baghdad, wounding two policemen. At 8:30 A.M., a rocket lands nearby a voting station in Azamiyah, northern Baghdad, injuring one civilian. Half an hour later, a mortar lands near a polling station in the Kazemiyah area. The mortar does not explode. Insurgents open fire on a polling station in the Amil district of western Baghdad. Iraqi policemen return fire, accidentally wounding three civilians on their way to vote. At midday, insurgents shoot and kill a voter walking home from a polling station in western Baghdad.

    As has already been discussed in previous chapters, insurgents stepped up their attacks against Iraqi politicians in preparation for the December 15, 2005, parliamentary elections. As part of pre-election violence, insurgents unleashed a wave of assassinations and kidnappings targeting candidates running in the elections as well as election workers. Attacks against party offices also became common.

    As was the case with the October referendum, violence on the day of the December 15 election was relatively light. Some of day's violence included the following:

- Three separate attacks on polling stations in Mosul: at the first, a bomb kills one person; at another station, a grenade kills a school guard; a mortar attack on a third polling station does not cause any casualties.
- In Tal Afar, a mortar shell kills one civilian outside a polling station.
- A bomb explodes in Ramadi.
- In Tikrit, a mortar round strikes a polling station.
- A mortar attack injures one child in Baghdad. A second mortar attack (on a different polling station) causes no injuries.
- In Muqdadiyah, north of Baghdad, a bomb injures two election workers after security forces accidentally set it off while trying to defuse it.
- In Fallujah, a bomb is defused. U.S. forces also report defusing several bombs in other predominantly Sunni neighborhoods in the country.

  After the elections, however, insurgents resumed their attacks and focused on undermining the political process through attacks on government workers and their families and government buildings. These attacks helped weaken the government and often made the prime minister and the Shi'ite-led Interior Ministry look ineffective at providing security and look complicit in the growing sectarian violence.

- **Strike at major aid and government projects after completion; break up project efforts when they acquire visibility or have high levels of employment:** Insurgents and terrorists often simply struck at the most vulnerable projects, but they learned that timing their attacks, looting, sabotage, and intimidation to strike when projects were completed meant the Coalition and government aid efforts had maximum cost with minimum effect. They struck at projects when the security forces protecting workers and aid teams were no longer there. This often led the local population to blame the Coalition or government for not keeping promises or providing the proper protection. Alternatively, breaking up project efforts when they began to have maximum local visibility and employment impact had many of the same effects.
- **Hit the softest element of Iraqi military, security, and police forces:** As mentioned in the previous section, insurgents found they could strike at men on leave, their families, recruits or those seeking to enlist, green troops and trainees, and low-quality units. High-profile mass killings received major media attention. Moreover, isolated forward elements in hostile or threatened areas not only were vulnerable, but successful attacks broke up governance, aid efforts, and intimidated local populations. This strategy was most damaging to Iraqi police, which remained the weakest element in the security apparatus. The MNF-I-published numbers of "trained and equipped" Iraqi forces did not take into account this attrition by insurgents against the mainly Shi'ite police trainees.
- **Create informal distributed networks for C^4I—deliberately or accidentally:** Like drug dealers before them, Iraqi insurgent and Islamist extremists learned enough about COMINT (communications intelligence) and SIGINT (signals intelligence) to stop using most vulnerable communications assets, and to bypass many—if not most—of the efforts to control cash flow and money transfers.

  The use of messengers, direct human contact, coded messages through the Internet, propaganda Web pages, and more random methods of electronic communication were all cases in point. At the broader level, however, insurgents in Iraq adapted to having

cells and elements operate with considerable autonomy, and by loosely linking their operations by using the media and reporting on the overall pattern of attacks to help determine the best methods and targets.

Smuggling, drug sales, theft and looting, and direct fund transfers also largely bypassed efforts to limit operations through controls on banking systems, charities, etc. Under these conditions, a lack of central control and cohesive structure could actually be an asset, allowing highly flexible operations with minimal vulnerability to roll-up and attack.

The existence of parallel, noncompeting groups of hostile nonstate actors provided similar advantages and had the same impact. The fact that insurgent and Islamist extremist groups operated largely independently and used different tactics and target sets greatly complicated U.S. operations and increased overall effectiveness.

- **Deny the Coalition and Iraqi government local victory:** The insurgents found early in the fighting that they could disperse and reinfiltrate into many towns and parts of cities the moment Coalition and combat-ready Iraqi elements left and deny the Iraqi government the ability to either deploy police or govern. Alternatively, bombings and sabotage could prevent or restrict the recovery of a town or area and create a level of risk that meant many would not return or attempt to live a normal life. Even as late as November 2005, insurgents were able to capture large parts of Ramadi and exert control.

  In another example, insurgents in Diyala Province took advantage of the U.S. hands-off approach that let the Iraqi security forces take the lead in security operations. ISF in Diyala, however, were majority Shi'ite operating in a majority Sunni area and most chose staying at the base rather than engaging the large numbers of Ansar al-Sunna insurgents in and around Balad Ruz and Baquba.

  By the end of 2006 insurgents controlled the political and economic space in much of Diyala Province and the U.S. military was forced to take the lead again and wage a counterinsurgency campaign. The ethnically mixed population in Diyala Province lost faith in Iraqi security forces and the government, and some Sunnis turned to insurgent groups for protection while Shi'ite militia came from the south to protect residents.
- **Street scouts and spotters:** Like many previous insurgent groups, Iraqi hostiles learned to have children, young men, and others use cell phones, signals, and runners to provide tactical scouting, intelligence, and warning in ways that proved very difficult to detect and halt.
- **Make cities and towns urban sanctuaries and defensive morasses:** Iraqi insurgents found that cities with supportive and/or accepting populations could be made into partial sanctuaries and centers for defensive fighting and ambushes and that tactical defeat could normally be dealt with by dispersal and hiding among the civilian population. Such tactics worked well in attacks on local authorities and security forces friendly to the United States, efforts to block nation building at the local level, and efforts to exploit religion, ethnicity, tribalism, etc.

  Several cities in Al Anbar Province served as sanctuaries for militants, including Ramadi, Fallujah, Hit, and Qaim. Insurgents typically left the cities before a major U.S. operation began and returned once the operation ended. After insurgents reinfiltrated Fallujah, the U.S. military learned to stay and hold the area after a major operation. However, there were not sufficient forces available to hold the other violent cities in Anbar Province. Despite an end to major operations, Ramadi remained a

contested city in 2007. And as mentioned above, insurgents occupied cities in Diyala Province after the United States turned over the lead to Iraqi security forces.

As the civil conflict intensified in 2006, Shi'ite militias also used cities and large neighborhoods as sanctuaries. In Baghdad, the large Shi'ite neighborhood of Sadr City became the base of Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and became increasingly impassable to U.S. troops. Soft sectarian cleansing in southern Iraq—in the form of intimidation campaigns forcing Sunnis to leave their homes—also gave Shi'ite militias virtual safe havens among the population.

- **Use neighboring states and border areas as partial sanctuaries:** While scarcely a new tactic, Iraqi insurgents made increased use of cross-border operations and took advantage of the difficulties in securing the Syrian, Iranian, and Saudi borders. By March 2005, for example, these tactics had created a near sanctuary in the area along the Euphrates from Hit and Haditha toward Syria and through Ubaydi, Qaim, Karabilah, and Qusaybah to the Syrian border along the road to Abu Kamal.[219] The Vietnamese used the same tactic in Cambodia and Laos, as have many other insurgent forces. The idea of securing a nation by securing the territory within its boundaries is often a tactical myth.

  In 2006 and 2007 the United States increasingly charged Shi'ite militias on the eastern side of Iraq of using the long border with Iran as crossing points for weapons and money.

- **Create dispersed and rapidly mobile operations and centers, mixed with fixed "die-hard" and "sleeper" installations:** The insurgents rapidly learned not to concentrate operatives and to keep them rapidly mobile. They mixed these with die-hard facilities designed to fight and defend themselves and inflict casualties if attacked, and with sleeper cells and stay behind operations to recover after an area was attacked, captured, and "secured" by Coalition and Iraqi forces.

- **Exploit weaknesses in U.S. human intelligence (HUMINT), battle damage assessment (BDA), and damage characterization capabilities:** Iraqi insurgents and other Islamist extremists learned that U.S. intelligence was optimized around characterizing, counting, and targeting things, rather than people, and that the United States had a poor capability to measure and characterize infantry and insurgent numbers, wounded, and casualties. They exploited these weaknesses in dispersal, conducting attacks, concealing the extent of losses, and manipulating the media by claiming civilian casualties and collateral damage.

- **Counter U.S. advantages in intercepting satellite and cellular communications:** Insurgents utilized the text messaging function of cell phones to communicate in an effort to avoid electronic eavesdropping by the United States. Insurgents often used more than one phone to communicate a message, so that those listening in heard only part of the message. No doubt, Shi'ite militias used similar tactics.

- **Exploit slow Iraqi and U.S. reaction times at the local tactical level, particularly in built-up areas:** Learn to exploit the delays in U.S. response efforts, and rigidities in U.S. tactical C^4I behavior, to attack quickly and disperse.

- **Exploit fixed Iraqi and U.S. patterns of behavior:** Take advantage of any tendency to repeat tactics, security, movement patterns, and other behavior; find vulnerabilities and attack.

- **Hit at U.S. HUMINT links and translators:** U.S. dependence on Iraqi translators and intelligence sources was a key area of U.S. vulnerability and one the insurgents learned to focus on. Several sources stated that as of 2007, 400 Iraqi translators had been killed.
- **Use "resurgence" and reinfiltration—dig in, hide, and reemerge:** Disperse under pressure or when defeat seems likely. Let the United States take an "empty" city or objective. "Resurge" when the U.S. tactical presence declines.
- **Use incident frequencies, distribution of attacks, and tactics that strain or defeat U.S. intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (IS&R) assets and the ability to support Iraqi forces:** Assets like remotely operated vehicles (RPVs), aircraft, SIGINT systems, etc., provided significant capability *when they were available*. It was unclear whether it was deliberate or not, but the geographic spread and daily incident count in Iraq indicated that insurgent movements and actions reached numbers too large to cover. In fact, the United States averaged some 1,700–2,000 patrols per day during May 2004.

  Insurgents were still vulnerable to such efforts, but quickly found that the United States had far less ability to track and characterize irregular forces, insurgent/terrorist teams, and urban and dispersed infantry than forces using mechanized weapons or significant numbers of vehicles. Blending into the civilian population worked well for local insurgents and Islamists in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and Iraqi insurgents learned that they could exploit rules of engagement where the U.S. and Iraqi government forces do not have soldiers or agents on the ground to perform targeting and IFF (identification friend or foe) functions. As valuable as IS&R assets are, they do not provide some critical kinds of situational awareness with any reliability.

  As the civil conflict developed, it was increasingly impossible for the United States to track the various types of forces. The Sunni insurgents continued to operate largely in Anbar Province, but also increased their capabilities in Ninewa, Baghdad, Diyala, and Saladdin provinces. Shi'ite militias also became difficult to quantify and define. The Mahdi Army developed significant rogue components acting outside of Moqtada al-Sadr's control in at least 15 provinces. Due to the nature of the civil war and soft sectarian cleansing, it was impossible for the U.S. military to track combatants. Moreover, by 2007 the Iraqi population turned largely against the Coalition presence, making intelligence gathering even more difficult.
- **Counter U.S. IS&R capabilities by adapting new techniques of communication and interaction:** The leakage of some details on U.S. and allied intelligence collection methods led Islamist extremist and terrorist movements to make more use of couriers and direct financial transfer, use electronic communications more safely, find ways to communicate through the Internet that the United States could not target, disperse better, and improve their hierarchy and cell structure.

  The insurgents and militias also developed more sophisticated low-tech methods of communication and signaling. In Ramadi, insurgents flew kites over areas patrolled by U.S. troops to direct mortar fire and released pigeons to give away the location of Coalition forces. They also used codes announced through mosque loud speakers to signal an attack. For example, calls for blood drives or announcements of funeral processions were actually coded signals to insurgents of troop locations. In more than one instance, elaborate funeral processions were used to mask insurgent movement. The coffins,

which carried guns and RPGs, were set down behind a wall where insurgents could arm themselves, then turn and fire on Coalition patrols.[220]

- **Counter U.S. and Iraqi government IS&R assets with superior HUMINT:** Developments in Iraq indicated that the United States faced a repetition of its experience in Vietnam in the sense that as various insurgent factions organized, they steadily improved their intelligence and penetration of organizations like the CPA, CJTF-7, the Iraqi government and security forces, and the Iraqi factions backing nation building.

  Like Vietnam, Iraq was a warning that hostile HUMINT sources were often pushed into providing data because of family ties, a fear of being on the losing side, direct and indirect threats, etc. In Iraq, it seemed likely that family, clan, and ethnic loyalties made many supposedly loyal Iraqis become at least part-time sources and that U.S. vetting would often be little more than either a review of past ties or checks on the validity of data provided.

  The end result was a high degree of transparency concerning U.S. and Iraqi government operations. This often provided excellent targeting data on key U.S. and allied officials, events, etc. It included leverage and blackmail, and vulnerability data, as well as warning of U.S. and other military operations.

  According to U.S. military sources, insurgents had recruited Iraqi prostitutes and children to gather intelligence around the Green Zone in an effort to pinpoint vulnerabilities. Because women were not stopped and searched at checkpoints as frequently as men, insurgents increasingly used them to transport munitions. Prostitutes were used to gain information from their customers about Coalition operations, and children, who mostly went about unnoticed, were used to count vehicles and identify patterns in Coalition patrols and schedules. It was suspected that this information was then passed to sympathizers within the Iraqi police forces who could enter and exit the zone without being searched.[221]

- **Use the media, infiltrators/sympathizers, and ex-detainees for counterintelligence:** Constantly monitor the media and the Internet for data on U.S. and Iraqi intelligence, targeting, and operational data. Use infiltrators and sympathizers. Debrief released prisoners and detainees to learn what their capture and interrogation reveals about U.S. and Iraqi intelligence efforts.

OVERALL PATTERNS

In summary, the insurgency evolved tactics, some of which were adapted by Shi'ite militias and other violent Iraqi factions, that posed a major challenge to both the conventional warfighting superiority of U.S.–dominated Coalition forces and the concepts such forces had of swarming and adapting high-technology systems to counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. The insurgents and militias showed that low-technology insurgent forces can, in some ways, be far more effective at swarming than high-mobility, high-technology, advanced IS&R forces.

This is not a new lesson. Many insurgent and militia tactics were similar in many ways to the tactics used by other "asymmetric" and "popular" forces in dealing with conventional forces virtually since the beginning of war. Rather than some "fourth-generation" concept, they stemmed back at least to the days of Sun Tzu,

and many of the problems the Iraqi government and Coalition forces faced as similar to those raised in modern, successful insurgencies like the Communist Chinese and Vietnamese.

The tactics that have driven the fighting must also be kept in their broader political context. They again highlight the fact that the insurgency's political battles—preventing effective governance, preventing Sunnis from joining Iraqi security forces and hindering the training of Iraqi forces, and pushing Shi'ites toward civil war—were far more important than its military battles. Although attacks against Coalition forces continued as long as they retained a presence, the rising tide of civil conflict made the battle for political and economic space in Iraq more important to the insurgency and other sectarian groups.

Extremists on all sides sought to eliminate moderates through intimidation and threats, and increasingly Iraqis were forced to align with their respective sectarian militias. The insurgency continued to use the above tactics against Coalition forces, but there was also a trend toward unifying insurgent components into a larger organization—headed by al-Qa'ida in Iraq—that could offer Sunnis protection against Shi'ite militias and thereby broaden the base of the insurgency's support for its long war of attrition.

- The Sunni insurgency became the equivalent of a distributed network: a group of affiliated and unaffiliated movements with well-organized cells. There were at least three major groups of Islamist extremist insurgents, and while they were loosely affiliated in an informal "Majlis" created in 2005, they were virtually independent for much of the conflict. In the latter half of 2006, however, there was an effort on behalf of the new leadership of al-Qa'ida in Iraq to unite various components of the insurgency in an umbrella organization. Still, they were difficult to attack and defeat on an individual basis because they did not have a unitary or cohesive structure or a rigid hierarchy. The larger movements had leadership, planning, financing, and arming cadres kept carefully separate from most operational cells in the field. These cells became increasingly specialized and compartmentalized to simplify training and retain expertise, as well as improve security. Accordingly, defeating a given cell, regional operation, or small organization did not defeat the insurgency, although it could weaken it.
- The insurgency developed a form of low-technology swarm tactics that were superior to what the high-technology Coalition and Iraqi forces had been able to find as a countermeasure. The insurgents had a natural advantage in terms of time and their tempo of operations because they are fighting a "long war" or war of attrition. They did need to respond to the pace of political and military events in Iraq, but they could still move much more slowly, swarm in cycles episodically, and concentrate on highly vulnerable targets at the time of their choosing.
- The heavy use of IEDs, suicide bombings, short-term ambushes, and low-level killings and assassinations ensured that the exposure of insurgent forces was limited and only a minimal insurgent presence was needed. Concentrating on soft targets, remotely triggered IEDs and bombs, and carefully controlled ambushes reduces the profile that the Coalition could use for intelligence collection, and any exposure to Coalition and the more effective Iraqi forces units. Swarming in the form of steadily increasing numbers

of IED and low-level attacks partially compensated for the relatively low success rate of many attacks.

- Media coverage, word of mouth, and penetration into Coalition and Iraqi government operations provided both intelligence and a good picture of what tactics worked in military, political, and media terms. Movements could swarm slowly around targets of opportunity, and they relied on open-source reporting for much of their intelligence and knowledge of combat effectiveness. The Internet and infiltration from other nations gave them knowledge of what tactics worked from other areas. The ability to swarm against vulnerable civil and military targets at the time of the insurgent's choosing and to focus on political and media effects sharply reduced the need to fight battles—particularly if the odds were against the insurgents.
- The insurgency operated both above and below the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority. It avoided battles when it could, and it preferred ambushes and IED attacks that struck at Coalition and Iraqi targets with either great superiority at the local level or through remote attacks using IEDs. It attacked vulnerable Iraqi and foreign civil targets using suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and other tactics in ways that the Coalition and Iraqi forces could not anticipate or fully defend against.
- Insurgent groups took advantage of substantial popular support in some Sunni areas to disperse and hide among the population, forcing the Coalition and Iraqi forces to use tactics and detainments that often alienated the people in the areas where they attacked or attempted to detain insurgents, while still allowing the insurgents to disperse and escape. These tactics deprived the Coalition and Iraqi forces of much of their ability to exploit superior weapons, IS&R assets, and conventional warfighting expertise, and used a countervailing strategy focused on Coalition and Iraqi government weaknesses.
- The insurgents carefully studied the lessons of the "Battle of Fallujah" in 2004. They realized that they did not benefit from major battles against Coalition forces and were too weak to take on Coalition-supported Iraqi forces in direct combat. Dispersal and concealment were essential parts of both survival tactics and swarming, as were efforts to wait out the presence of Coalition forces in areas where the insurgents had been pushed out or dispersed. The insurgents were often able to either force the Coalition to hold a "liberated" area indefinitely or return when the Iraqi government and Iraqi forces proved unable to function effectively once Coalition forces withdrew. They also exploited high unemployment and ethnic and sectarian tension when the government could not put a Sunni face on its presence and the fact that the Iraqi police were generally unable to provide security unless Coalition or Iraqi Army/special security forces were present. This point became increasingly important as the conflict evolved into a civil war in which each side battled for control of economic and political space, rather than tactical victories. Insurgents blamed the Shi'ite-led government for widespread unemployment as well as the failure of Iraqi security forces. Shi'ite militias, in turn, saw the Sunni insurgency as the root cause of sectarian conflict and believed that the only way to security was to marginalize or eliminate Sunnis.
- The insurgents attacked above the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority by exploiting a diverse mix of past loyalty to the Ba'ath Party, Sunni sectarianism and fears of the loss of power and resources, and Iraqi nationalism against foreign occupiers and Iraqi "puppets." Its attacks were designed to wear down the Coalition forces

through attrition and destroy their base of domestic political support. They were designed to paralyze the Iraqi government and force development effort, to prevent Iraqi Sunnis from joining the Iraqi forces and supporting the government, to provoke Shi'ite and Kurdish reactions that divided the country along ethnic and sectarian lines, and to provoke a civil war that prevented Iraq from emerging as a nation and divided it in ways that would create a national and eventual regional struggle between neo-Salafi Islamic Puritanism and other Sunnis, Shi'ites, and secular voices. This political battle was more important to the success or failure of the insurgency than any aspect of the military battle.

The cumulative impact of these changes in insurgent tactics created for Coalition forces was that they continued to allow various insurgent groups and militias to continue to fight below the threshold where U.S., British, and other Coalition forces could exploit their superior conventional weapons and technology. They kept casualties high enough to create a serious war of attrition and forced Coalition forces to spend at least several orders of magnitude more on countermeasures than the insurgents had to spend on new weapons and tactics.

14

Measuring the Cost in Blood: Overall Patterns in Casualties

The cost of Iraq's drift into insurgency and civil war is a tragedy that may never be possible to quantify, but what is already known about the growing human cost of the fighting makes the seriousness of the conflict all too clear the cost in blood is a far better measure of the scale of this tragedy than the cost in dollars.

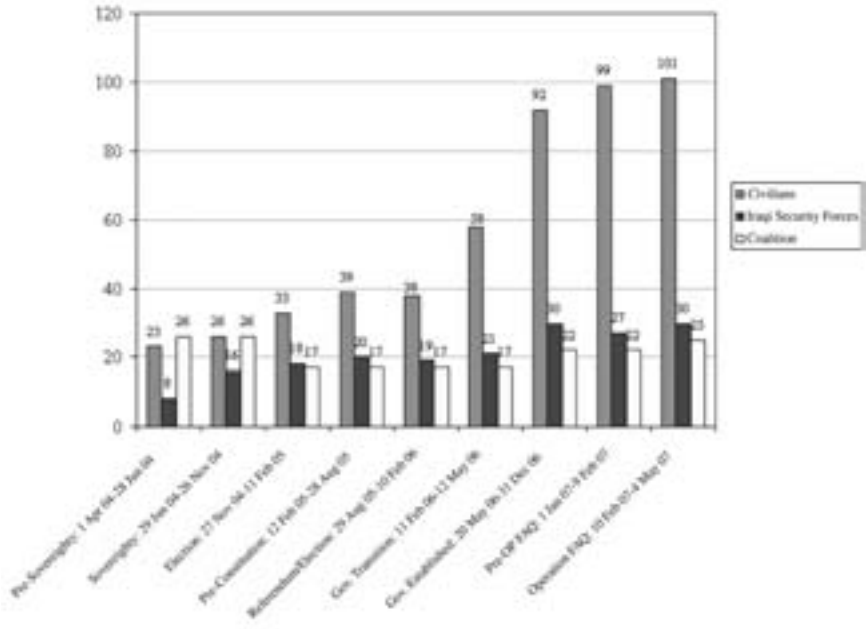
The number of U.S., Coalition, and Iraqi casualties tended to rise as the insurgency and civil conflict became more intense, but casualty rates did not alter in predictable ways. In broad terms casualties tended to rise over time, but shifted from Coalition-dominated casualty lists to a steadily higher number of Iraqi casualties as Iraqi forces came on line and as the insurgents shifted their target base to other Iraqis in an effort to prevent the Iraqi government from becoming effective and to cause a civil war. These trends are reflected in the broad cycles in both Coalition and Iraqi military casualties shown in Figure 14.1.

As has been discussed throughout this analysis, much of the reporting and analysis on Iraq reflected an unconscious return to a "body count" mentality of the Vietnam War. The focus was on the number of dead and not the wounded, displaced, or other types of victims of war. This presented critical problems in the case of reporting on Iraqi civilians and Iraqi forces. Counts of the killed ignore the number of wounded, as well as the victims of less violent forms of sectarian and ethnic cleansing.

PATTERNS IN COALITION CASUALTIES

There are reliable data on U.S. troops killed and wounded and the number of allied soldiers in Coalition forces that have been killed.

- Figure 14.2 shows the pattern by month in all Coalition deaths after the invasion. There is a slow upward trend through mid-2005, but the patterns vary sharply from



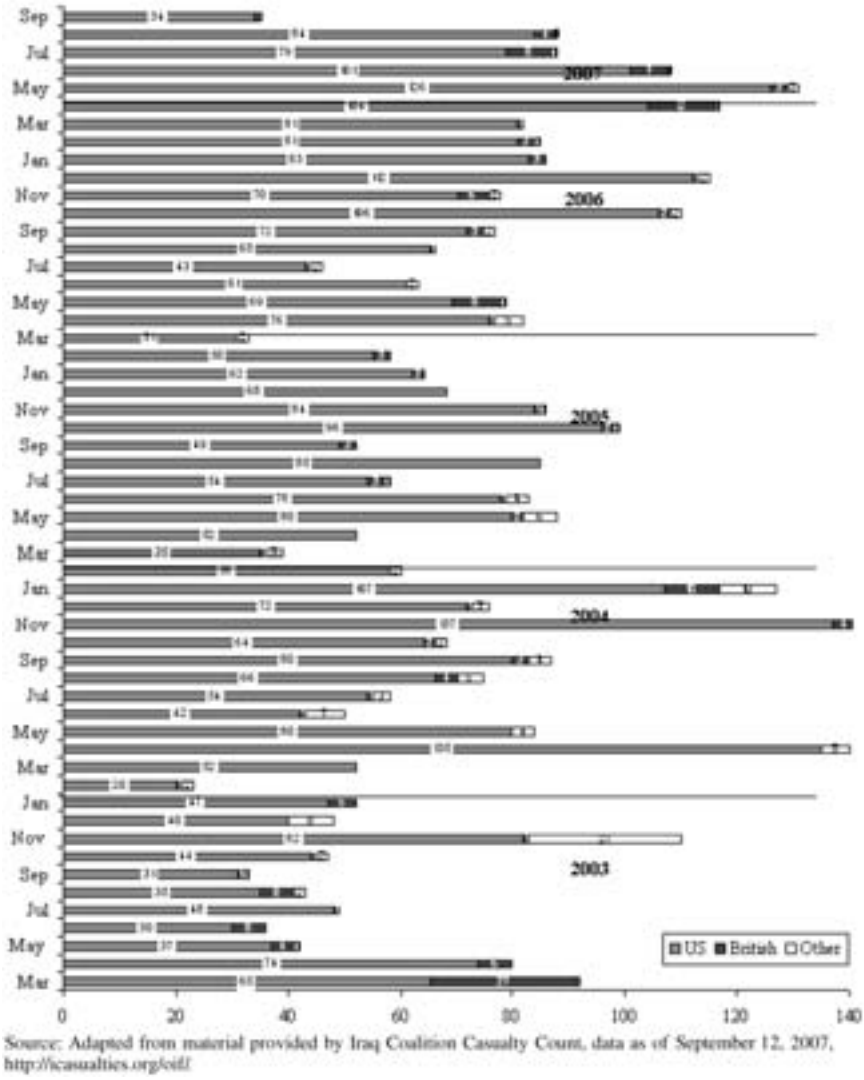
Source: Material adapted from "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Quarterly Report to Congress, Department of Defense, June 2007, p. 51, www.defenselink.mil.

*Note: Data points are +/-5% estimates from a graph provide in the DoD report.

Figure 14.1 Trends in Daily Casualties: April 2004–May 2007

month to month. They also become more consistent after mid-2005, in part because the United States stopped fighting large urban battles.

- Figure 14.3 shows casualties by Iraqi governorate. The data in this figure clearly show that the insurgency has been concentrated in the Sunni provinces in the west—Anbar, Salahideen, and Ninawah (Mosul)—and in Baghdad. The Kurdish areas have been far more secure, and so have most provinces in the south. Basra has been a partial exception. Such data highlight the fact that the insurgency has been largely Sunni Arab and concentrated in only 4 of Iraq's 18 governorates rather than national.
- The trends in U.S. casualties alone are shown in Figures 14.4 and 14.5; these figures show just how important it is to include the number of wounded and to distinguish how serious the wound is. These data make it clear that there are nearly seven times as many U.S. soldiers wounded as killed, but military medicine and protection gear have advanced to the point where less than half of the wounded cannot return to combat. This is a major advance over previous wars.[1]
- Figure 14.6 shows an increase in U.S. deaths from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) over time. Although IED deaths fluctuated over time, there was a significant rise in successful detonations toward the end of 2005. September 2007 saw the fewest deaths in a month from IEDs since February 2004.

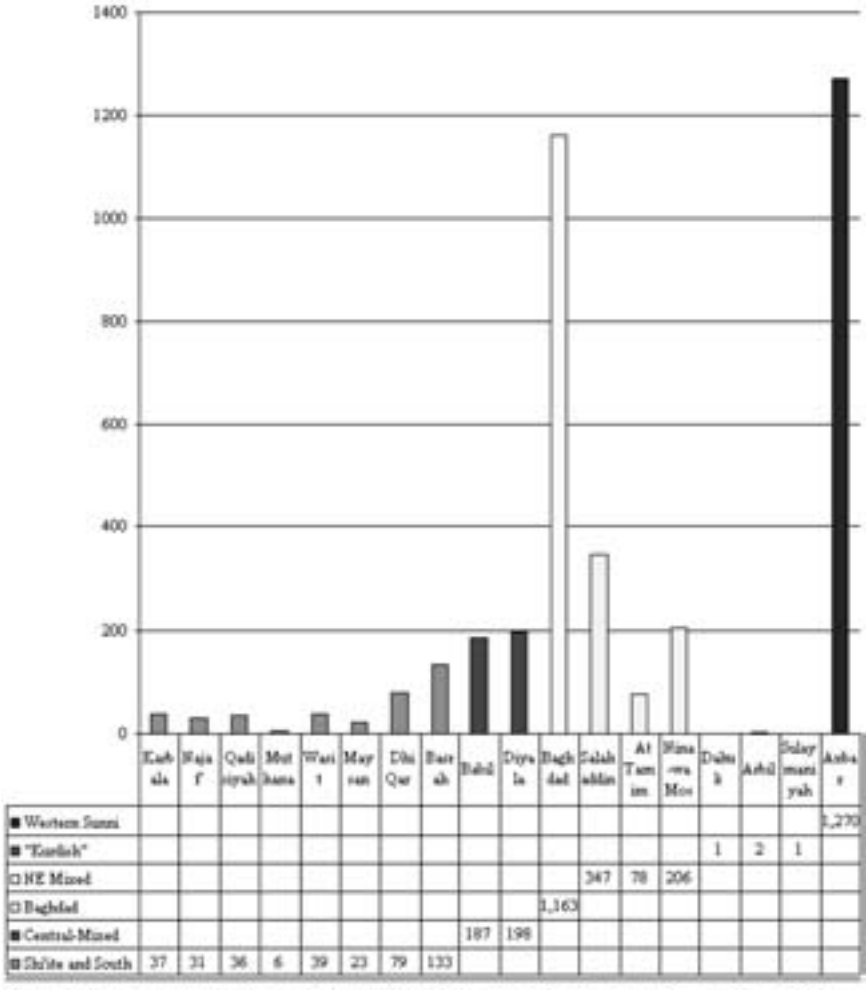


Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of September 12, 2007, http://icasualties.org/oif/.

Figure 14.2 Coalition Deaths by Month and Nationality: March 2003 to September 2007

There is a message in Figures 14.4 and 14.5, however, that is often ignored in both military analysis and the media. The figures on U.S. casualties show that intense combat produces much sharper swings in the number of wounded than in the number killed. As a result, the number of both killed and wounded is a much better measure of combat activity and of the sacrifice that military forces make in combat.

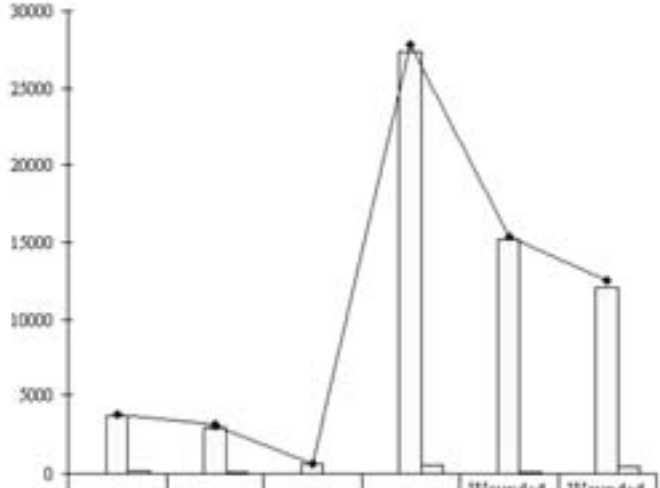
The surge shaped only a small part of the overall pattern of casualties over more than four years of war and civil conflicts, but this pattern does show some of the



Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of September 12, 2007, http://icasualties.org/oif/Province.aspx.

Figure 14.3 Coalition Casualties by Iraqi Governorate or Province through September 2007

complexities in understanding the relationship between the patterns in the fighting and their human cost. U.S. and Coalition casualties declined relative to those in Iraqi civilians and Iraqi security forces (ISF) during the first three months of the "surge." They did, however, show the cumulative cost to the United States and its allies in human terms and provide another metric of the seriousness of the fighting. Figure 14.1 shows Coalition and Iraqi casualties according to the Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress until May 2007.



	Total Deaths	Killed in Action	Non-Hostile	Total Wounded	Wounded in Action: RTD	Wounded in Action Non-RTD
DoD US Civilians	7	6	1	-	-	-
Post Saddam Fall 1 May 03-Present	3,619	2,970	649	27,303	15,220	12,083
Invasion 19 Mar-30 Apr 03	139	109	30	542	116	426
Totals	3,765	3,085	680	27,848	15,336	12,512

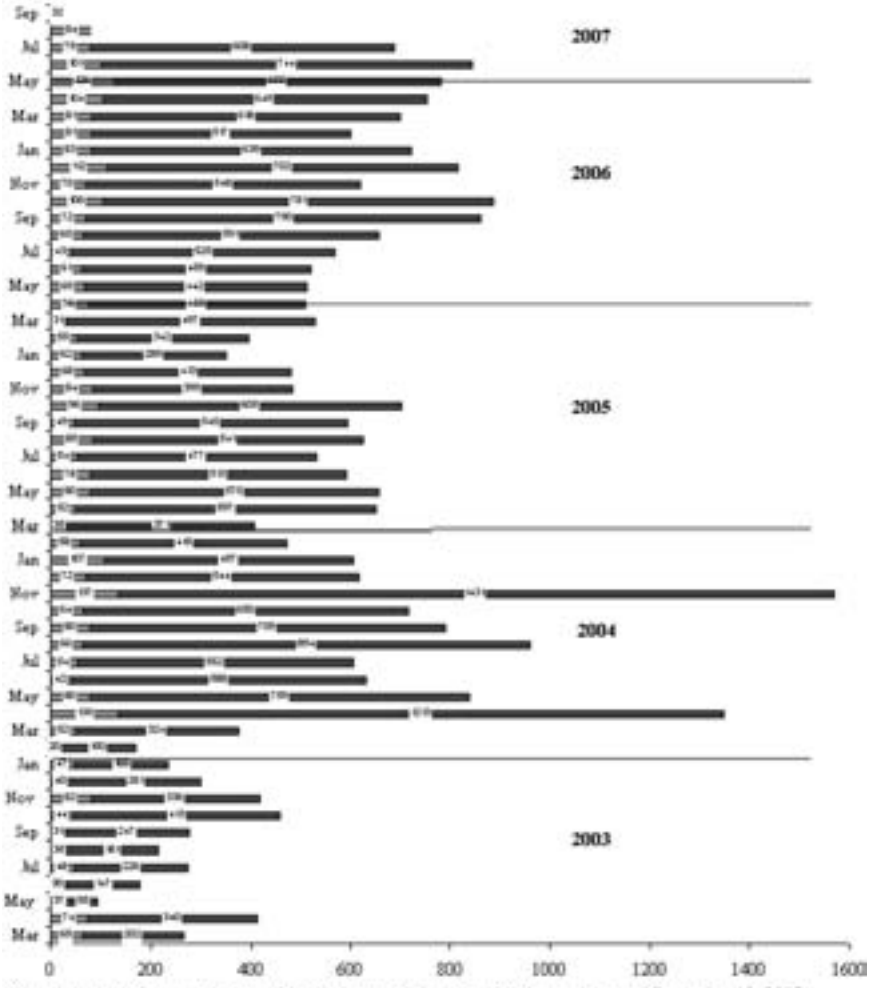
Source: Adapted from material provided by Department of Defense, September 12, 2007, http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf.

* Note: Totals do not include casualties in enforcing no fly zones before March 19, 2003. Wounded-RTD = equals lighter wounded where personnel were returned to duty within 72 hours. Wounded-Non-RTD= more serious wounds where solider could not be returned to duty within 72 hours.

Figure 14.4 U.S. Casualties in the Iraq War: Total Killed versus Wounded, March 2003–September 2007

This first quarter of 2007 marked the first time that more than 80 U.S. troops were killed in each of three consecutive months.[2] The rate of U.S. deaths in the capital in the first seven weeks of the security plan doubled from the previous seven weeks from 29 to 53. U.S. casualties also increased in Diyala Province; 15 U.S. troops were killed between February 14 and April 2, 2007. Deaths decreased in Anbar Province as the focus of the insurgency switched to Baghdad and Diyala. The rate of U.S. deaths throughout the country, however, stayed about the same for those seven weeks; 116 U.S. troops were killed in hostile incidents.[3]

Parts of the Baghdad security plan made U.S. troops more vulnerable, particularly the placement of additional troops in small outposts throughout the capital and in other parts of the country. John Pike, director of Globalsecurity.org, commented that "the closer you get to a stand-up fight, the closer you're going to get to that 3-to-1 ratio" that was typical of U.S. warfare in the twentieth century. The ratio of killed to wounded, which usually stands at an average of 1 to 8, dropped to a ratio of 4.8 to 1 in May. This signified a greater intensity of combat and lethality of attacks.

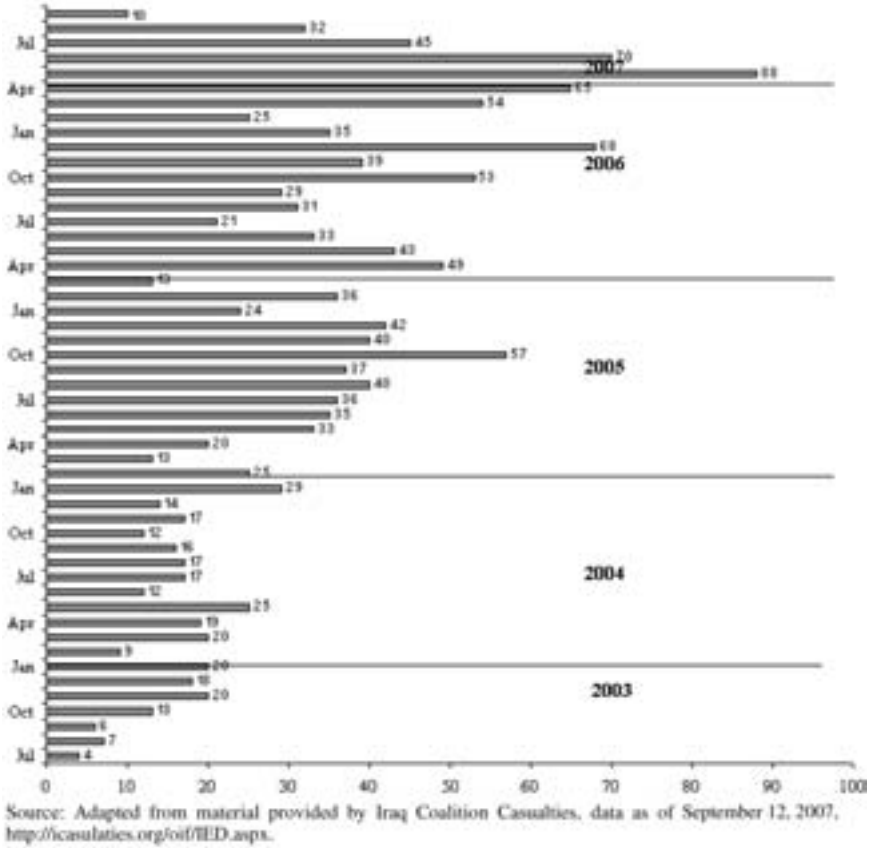


Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of September 12, 2007, http://icasualties.org/oif/US_Chart.aspx and http://icasualties.org/oif/woundedindex.aspx.

Figure 14.5 U.S. Casualties in the Iraq War: Killed versus Wounded, March 2003–April 2007

The increase in U.S. fatalities in May was due to three factors: (1) new tactics that demanded a higher profile for U.S. troops in an attempt to secure Baghdad's neighborhoods and prevent civilian deaths; (2) a greater number of explosives attacks with greater degrees of lethality; and (3) a rise in direct attacks on U.S. troops, involving tactics with greater degrees of strategic complexity.

The death toll in May for U.S. troops was the third highest for any month since the onset of the war in March 2003, with 127 American fatalities. The two most



Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualties, data as of September 12, 2007, http://icasualties.org/oif/IED.aspx.

Figure 14.6 U.S. IED Deaths: July 2003 to September 2007

deadly months for U.S. troops were 137 in November 2004 and 135 in April 2004. An Associated Press count on May 24, 2007, stated that 3,433 U.S. service members had died since the beginning of hostilities in March 2003, at least 2,804 of whom died as a result of hostile action. This count is seven times higher than that of the Department of Defense.[4] April 2007 was also the deadliest month for British forces since March 2003. A total of 11 British troops were killed in combat in southern Iraq.[5] A British soldier was shot to death in southern Iraq on June 7, bringing the British death toll to 150.[6]

The United States suffered more casualties in Baghdad Province than in Anbar Province in April 2007 for the first time since 2005. Over half of the U.S. casualties in April occurred in Baghdad, up from 27 percent in February as a result of the new Baghdad security plan. Troops in Anbar had also seen a reduction in violence in the past six months, resulting in part from an agreement with local tribes.[7]

PATTERNS IN IRAQI CASUALTIES

Iraqi casualties have been much higher than U.S. and Coalition casualties, but much harder to count. The nature of the sectarian fighting in the "war after the war" also changed the meaning of casualty counts in monitoring the progression of the conflict. As tragic as the following set of numbers appears, it does not provide a full picture of the sectarian war.

What was equally important was "soft" ethnic cleansing by sectarian groups in order to control political and economic space. This involved intimidation campaigns, threats, kidnappings, propaganda, corruption, and blackmail to force other ethnic groups out of an area. An important measurement of this cleansing was the number of internally displaced persons, but the key figure—the amount of popular support that these sectarian groups received—was difficult to measure and is not represented by the numbers below.

Some radical differences in estimates of the number of Iraqis killed have been addressed in previous chapters. Neither the United States nor the Iraqi government have ever provided detailed estimates of the total killed and wounded. No one who has made public estimates of the total number of casualties can claim any certainty that their estimate is even approximately correct.

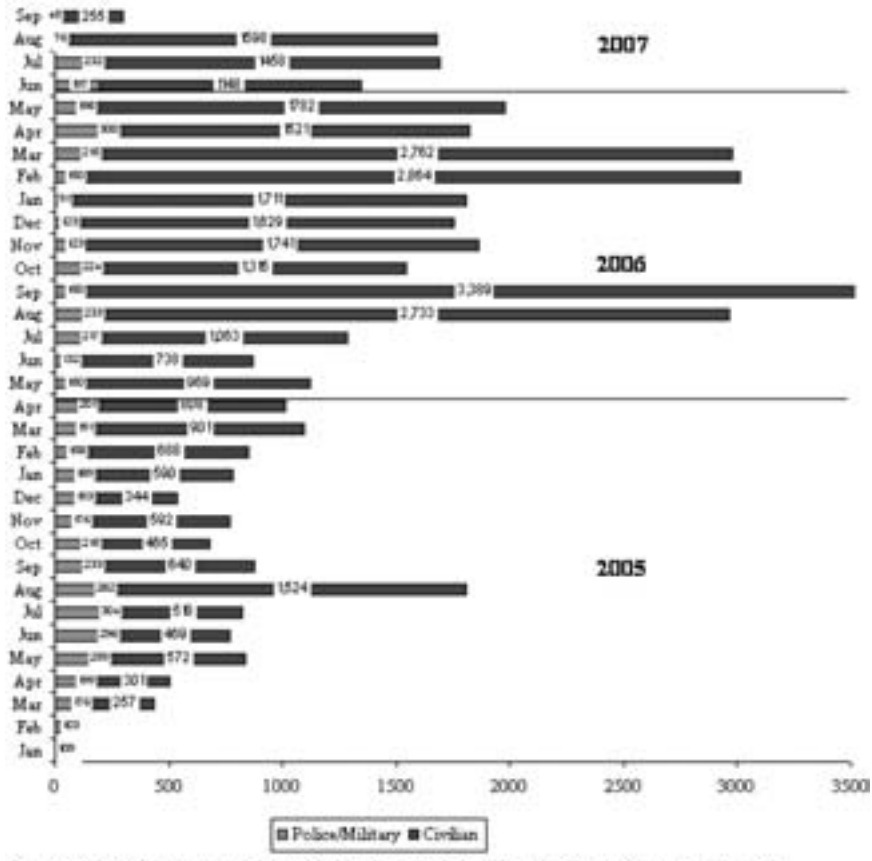
The estimates by Iraq Body Count (www.Iraqbodycount.org) and Iraq Coalition Casualties (http://icasualties.org/oif/) are, however, often seen to have provided the "guesstimates" among NGO organizations on Iraqi casualties, even though their counts are still extremely uncertain.[8]

The trends in total casualties by major period in the fighting are shown in Figure 14.7. Iraq Coalition Casualties also provided the monthly breakouts of both Iraqi military and Iraqi civilian casualties beginning in 2005, as shown in Figure 14.8. If these counts are accurate, the number of killed continued to rise in spite of the surge.[9] In late March, Iraq Body Count estimated that between 64,575 and 70,724 Iraqi civilians had been killed since the U.S.–led invasion in 2003. By late June 2007, Iraq Body Count estimated that the total was between 66,602 and 72,910. By mid-September, the estimate was 72,596–79,187.[10] Iraq Body Count describes the impact of the surge as follows:

Figure 14.7 Iraq Body Count Estimate of Iraqi Civilian Casualties

Year:	5/1/03–3/19/04	3/20/04–3/19/05	3/20/05–3/19/06	3/20/06–3/26/07
Civilians Killed/Day	20	31	41	73
Total Civilians Killed	6,332	11,312	14,910	26,540
Killed by Mortars	30	303	286	1,374
Killed by IEDs/VBIEDs and Suicide Bombs	742	1,782	3,402	5,797
Killed in Bombings Killing More Than 50	447	446	712	1,476

Source: "Year Four: Simply the Worst," Press Release 15, Iraq Body Count, www.iraqbodycount.org.



Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, September 12, 2007, http://icasualties.org/oif/IraqiDeaths.aspx.

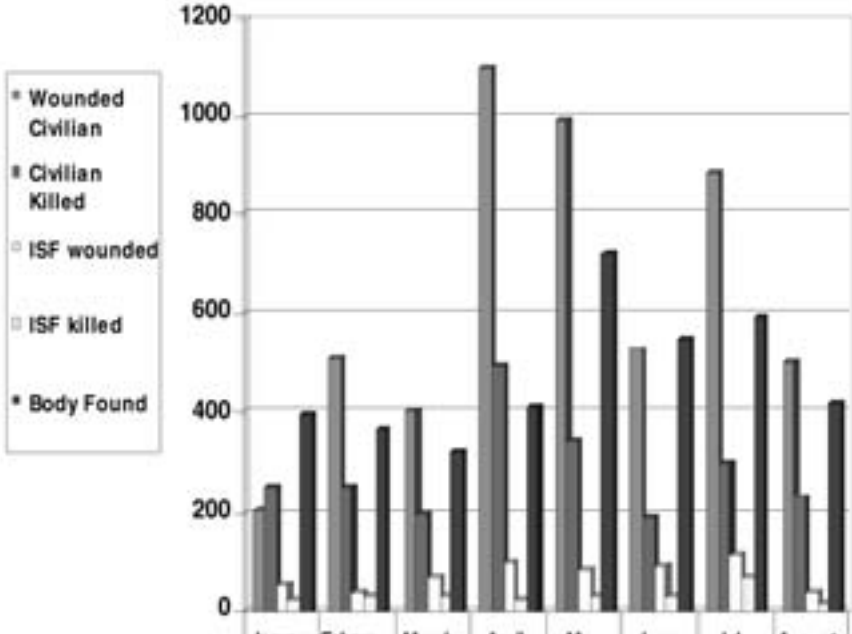
Figure 14.8 Total Iraqi Military and Civilian Casualties by Month: January 2005–September 2007

> Levels of violence reached an all-time high in the last six months of 2006. Only in comparison to that could the first half of 2007 be regarded as an improvement. Despite any efforts put into the surge, the first six months of 2007 was still the most deadly first six months for civilians of any year since the invasion.[11]

It also seems likely that there are many deaths that have never been counted or reported in the press and the other sources used by Iraq Body Count. These seem unlikely to have reached the much higher totals reported by Lancet and ORB, which use polling data and methods that do not seem to track with combat reporting and the patterns of civil violence in the areas polled.[12] It does seem likely, however, that by September 2007, the total number of Iraqi civilian dead was well over 100,000. Given the past correlation between killed and wounded in other conflicts, this makes

it likely that the number of seriously wounded was at least 200,000 to 300,000, although this can be little more than a rough guess.[13]

Once again, a detailed analysis of the impact of the surge provides an illustration of the more detailed patterns at work. Figure 14.9 highlights the disproportionate level of Iraqi civilian deaths in contrast to Iraq security forces fatalities through the first three quarters of 2007. In March and June 2007, where Iraqi casualties can be considered low by annual standards, around five Iraqi civilians for every ISF soldier were killed. ISF wounded are also quantifiably low in contrast to severely high levels of wounded civilians throughout the year. Although such figures are uncertain, the much higher estimates made by some other organizations, however, use methodologies and databases that are so weak that they simply lack credibility.



	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
Wounded Civilian	206	512	403	1104	999	530	893	507
Civilian Killed	255	256	198	495	344	190	300	235
ISF wounded	55	45	69	100	88	95	119	40
ISF killed	28	36	33	25	32	35	69	22
Body Found	395	365	324	411	726	548	596	421

Source: Anonymous high-ranking Iraqi Government Official.

Figure 14.9 Casualties in Iraq from January to August 2007

The rise of sectarian and ethnic fighting had a steadily grimmer cost in Iraqi lives. The Department of Defense March 2007 report to Congress noted a sharp increase in the number Iraqi civilian deaths in the second half of 2006 and early 2007. Daily average attacks against Iraqi security forces in January 2007 averaged 30 per day, which was consistent with previous months. Daily attacks on civilians in January rose to 50 per day, greater than the previous high of 40 in October 2006, according to Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Director Gen. Michael Maples.[14]

The mid-July White House Report to Congress, mandated by the Act on Iraq, cited an "overall decrease in sectarian violence [in Baghdad]," claiming it was "due in part to intensified Iraqi and Coalition operations focused on population security. However, evidence showed that the number of casualties nationwide had not decreased, but simply that insurgent activity began focusing on targets outside the capital.[15]

The U.S. military said violence had dropped in Baghdad under the new crackdown, with a 26-percent decline in "murders and executions" between February and March, and a 60-percent fall between the last week of March and the first week of April. According to a count kept by the *New York Times,* there were 450 bodies found in Baghdad during the first 4 weeks of the Baghdad security plan (February 13–March 13, 2007). U.S. military spokesman Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell stated that assassinations fell roughly 50 percent during the same period.[16]

The number of "body dumps" found in the capital and the surrounding urban belt did decrease at the start of the Baghdad security plan in mid-February. The number of bodies found each day ranged from single digits to the upper twenties, down from roughly 50 per day at the end of 2006. Nonetheless, finding even a dozen bodies on the streets of the capital every day meant that Sunni and Shi'ite militias were all too active. The drop did not continue into the late spring, indicating the cyclical nature of violence in Iraq.

President George W. Bush announced in the last week of April 2007 that "sectarian" deaths had declined by 50 percent since the start of the Baghdad security plan. President Bush said on May 10, "The level of sectarian violence is an important indicator of whether or not the strategy that we have implemented is working. Since our operation began, the number of sectarian murders has dropped substantially."[17] This number, however, was based on the body count number and did not include deaths from suicide bombs or IED attacks, which were often sectarian in nature.[18]

According to data provided by the Iraqi Ministries of Defense and Health, 2,067 Iraqis were killed in insurgent and sectarian violence in January 2007.[19] Statistics from Iraqi government sources showed that sectarian murders dropped to their lowest point in a year during the period February 13–March 1, 2007; the number of average bodies dumped per day fell from 22.8 to 14.3. There were a total of 265 bodies counted in Baghdad from February 13–March 13, compared with 1,440 the four weeks before. During the same period, 59 Iraqi security forces were killed, according to Iraqi military spokesman Brig. Qassim al-Mousawi.

Though U.S. government, and Iraqi sources and news services, cited a dip in sectarian killings in February, March, and April, a rise in sectarian killings occurred

during April, May, and June. Many areas witnessed a resurgence of sectarian killings in April and May. In the Shaab district of Baghdad, for example, Sunnis who initially welcomed the surge of U.S. forces said that they witnessed a return of sectarian killings and the presence of Shi'ite militiamen two months after the new troops were deployed.[20]

A U.S. source said in January, death squads killed 830 people, in February, 530, and in March, 542. Figures cited in one report estimated a total of 542 bodies found in the month of March, 440 in April, and 743 in May. According to the *New York Times,* 167 bodies were found in Baghdad in the first six days of June. In the first 24 days of May, 855 bodies were found, according to the Associated Press.[21] The number of unidentified corpses was still far fewer than those found during the peak periods of sectarian violence in 2006.[22] The UN, citing Health Ministry numbers, reported that 1,471 unidentified bodies were found in Baghdad in September 2006, and 1,782 in October of that year.[23]

IEDs, vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs), and suicide bombings kept the overall death rate comparable to previous months.[24] A count kept by the Associated Press indicated that 528 Iraqis were killed by IEDs in the month before the start of the new plan. That number fell 30 percent to 370 between February 13 and March 13, 2007.[25] In the 14 weeks preceding the start of the plan on February 14, 2007, at least 821 people died in 11 bombing attacks, most of which were suicide bombings, which killed more than 20 people at a time, according to a *Washington Post* analysis. There were at least 20 such attacks in the 14 weeks from the start of the plan until May 24, 2007, causing a death toll of at least 1,098.[26]

Numbers compiled by McClatchy Newspapers indicated that the number of violent deaths were 796 in March and 691 through April 24. The number of bodies found in February was 596, and it fell again in March to 473, nearly half of what it had been in December 2006. The number of people killed in explosive attacks, however, rose from March to April from 323 to 365 through April 24. This number, however, was based on the body count number and did not include deaths from suicide bombs or IED attacks, which were often sectarian in nature.[27]

U.S. military officials did acknowledge that Iraqi casualties increased in the provinces of Anbar, Babil, Diyala, and Ninewa, as the insurgency expanded its operations outside of the surge area of Baghdad. Civilian casualties dropped 26 percent from January through March, but the number of mass murders from car bombs and suicide bombings increased.[28]

A total of 2,762 Iraqis, including 331 policemen, were killed in violence in March, however, according to the Iraqi Ministry of Interior. During the first three weeks of the new security plan, 125 bodies were found on the streets, but that number rose to 230 the following three weeks, according to Iraqi morgue data.[29] From the beginning of May until May 24, 2007, 321 bodies were dumped in Baghdad.[30] The number of deaths from IED/VBIED/suicide bombings rose from an average of 40.4 a day to 51.2 a day during the same time period.[31]

Iraq Coalition Casualties (ICC) also reported 1,711 civilian deaths in January 2007, 1,381 in February, 1,674 in March, 1,521 in April, 1,782 in May, 1,148 in

June, 1,458 in July, and 1,598 in August. ICC also reported 91 ISF deaths in January, 150 in February, 212 in March, 300 in April, 198 in May, 197 in June, 232 in July, and 76 in August.[32]

The Department of Defense Quarterly Report on "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" for September 2007 noted that the levels of violence were lower, but still very serious in terms of casualties,[33]

> Coalition forces continued to attract the majority of attacks, while the Iraqi security forces and civilians continued to suffer the majority of casualties. The GoI [Government of Iraq] has reported that the number of civilians killed in Iraq, mainly due to catastrophic attacks by insurgents and terrorists, fell sharply from about 1,900 in May to 1,227 in June—the lowest level in five months—but rose again in July to 1,653. Militia activity initially decreased but rose in mid-May before falling again in June to the lowest level in a year. July's level of IED events was the lowest since November 2006, returning to pre-FAQ [Fardh al-Qanun—operation imposing law] levels—a result of Iraqi and Coalition security operations combined with Sunni tribal engagement. It is too early to determine the sustainability of these trends.
>
> . . . Baghdad remained the most violent area in Iraq, but levels of violence have dropped significantly since the commencement of FAQ as a result of combined Iraqi and Coalition operations. Marketplaces and high-profile places of worship are now more secure due to the implementation of physical protection measures and increased patrols by Iraqi forces. Additionally, no significant security incidents occurred on August 9 during the Commemoration of the Death of the 7th Imam, for which the Iraqi police and military planned and provided security for hundreds of thousands of Shi'a pilgrims to the Kadhamiyah Shrine in northern Baghdad.
>
> However, Coalition forces still encounter fighting in mixed sectarian areas where AQI [al-Qa'ida in Iraq] elements continue to harass and target the local populace. Fighting between Sunni groups and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) has been mostly isolated to the western districts of Baghdad, particularly West Rashid and Al Mansour. Of all the districts in Baghdad, the predominantly Shi'a Sadr City remains the most stable in terms of ethno-sectarian attacks. However, this area continues to provide support for JAM operatives who use the area for planning, logistics, and other support activities and as a base from which to launch attacks on the International Zone and neighboring areas.
>
> . . . The security situation in recent years has resulted in the internal displacement of nearly two million people, according to the UN High Commission on Refugees. By the end of May 2007, the number of displaced people was increasing at an average of 80,000–100,000 per month. If the GoI's February 2007 security plan for returning Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) succeeds, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees expects this rate of displacement to decrease to 40,000–50,000 per month.

THE TOTAL COST

There is no way to estimate the total cost in either blood or dollars of the war, how long it will last, and how much fighting will result. It has already cost the United States well over $600 billion in direct U.S. government spending and seems unlikely to have a total cost under $1 trillion. The dollar cost and opportunity cost to Iraq has

not yet been the subject of serious analytic estimates. Partition, however, has already been anything but soft. As the previous chapters have shown, it has (and does) involve immense human suffering. As of September 2007, it had driven more than 2 million Iraqis out of their country and displaced more than a million more inside Iraq. Some 8 million Iraqis seemed to have been reduced to dire poverty.

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The Lessons of Complexity, Uncertainty, and Risk

No one can predict the outcome of Iraq's insurgency and civil conflicts. There are no direct historical models to draw upon, and there are many different paths Iraq can take. If history does provide insights, it is that complex insurgencies and civil conflicts have often played out over periods of a decade or more. History also shows that even when security and stability do seem to have emerged, past sectarian and ethnic conflicts often reoccur when new factors revive past divisions and tensions.

Even under the best conditions, Iraq faces several more years of war, political uncertainty, weak governance, and faltering economic development. Moreover, as has been clear throughout this analysis, the most critical single factor in determining the timing and nature of the outcome will be the level of political conciliation and coexistence that Iraq's Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and other minorities can establish over time.

Military action cannot have lasting value without such political progress, and more effective governance at every level. Unfortunately, such progress has so far been faltering, and it is far from clear that it can move forward fast enough to keep the country from growing more violent and dividing further on sectarian and ethnic lines.

Progress in conciliation and coexistence must come primarily from within. Outside nations can help, or stop hindering, such efforts. No one from the outside can bring Iraqis together at this point or roll back the clock. Iraqis must act largely on their own and do so in spite of all the anger, violence, and separation of the past four years.

THE NEAR-TERM IMPACT OF U.S. POLICY DECISIONS

Much will depend, however, on whether the United States has the patience to stay in Iraq and can improve its nation-building efforts. It is not clear that the United States can or will do so. Steadily rising levels of casualties and cost are having a major impact on the U.S. political system. Support for the war has declined from both the American people and both parties in Congress. There is little confidence in the Bush administration or the president's leadership in public opinion polls, and there is growing domestic political pressure for early withdrawal.

At the same time, there so far has been relatively little attention in the United States to how many of Iraq's present problems are the result of American mistakes, failures in preparing for stability operations and counterinsurgency, and American inability to conduct effective nation building. As the previous chapters have shown, the United States did much to create the current mix of insurgency, civil violence, and a weak Iraqi political system. It cannot shift the burden of those mistakes to the Iraqis without great cost to its reputation and strategic interests, and without abdicating its moral and ethical responsibilities to some 27 million people.

No one can say with confidence what will happen in Iraq if the United States leaves precipitously and without making a continuing effort to compensate for its mistakes and failures. It is easy to talk about intensive civil war, "blood baths," and an international resurgence of al-Qa'ida. Such worst cases are possible, but the most likely result is less violent sectarian and ethnic cleansing, and the *de facto* division of much of the country. In either case, the result would be years of suffering as Iraqis tried to find some way to develop more effective governance and restructure their social order and economy. Such a slow struggle would not be as bloody, but would still be a major tragedy.

That said, no one can promise that any given U.S. strategy for staying in Iraq will succeed, or what any definition of "success" would prove to be. Hopefully, a sustained U.S. effort could still produce political pluralism and a reasonably effective rule of law, enough sectarian and ethnic equity to hold the country together, personal security for all Iraqis, a return of refugees, and economic growth and development. These are not demanding goals for any nation, but this has never meant that nations actually achieve them. It is all too possible that even if the United States does stay and carefully phases down its troop and aid levels, Iraq's civil conflict will not end and could even intensify.

All that can be said with confidence is that a failure to try until it is clear that the odds of failure make such an effort pointless could come to haunt the United States in the region and in the world for decades to come. Iraq will remain a major part of stability in the Gulf, and in the world's global energy trade and economy. If worst cases do occur, it may well sharply increase the level of neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremism and terrorism, Sunni and Shi'ite violence, and the role of Iran in Iraq, the Gulf, and the Middle East.

A U.S. failure in the Iraq War will be a poison chalice and legacy of American failure for the next administration and perhaps for years to come. In the case of a true

bloodbath, the United States might—having largely withdrawn—be confronted with the moral and ethical dilemma of either standing aside from a humanitarian disaster for which it had to share much of the blame, or trying to intervene under the worst possible conditions and with even a greater prospect of failure.

STRATEGIC AND GRAND STRATEGIC LESSONS

Whatever finally happens in Iraq, the United States and its allies need to consider the broader lessons of the "war after the war" in Iraq. The United States cannot afford to ignore the fact that no amount of conventional military superiority can deal with the different kinds of political, ideological, military, economic, and social challenges it has faced in Iraq.

The United States must find far more effective ways of dealing with the problems of conflict termination, stability operations, counterinsurgency, and nation building. The U.S. failures in all of these areas in Iraq from 2003 to the present have not been the fault of any foreign enemy; they have been the product of American inadequacies and a self-inflicted wound.

Iraq is a case study in grand strategic and strategic decision making as well as a major policy issue. The rise and scale of insurgency and civil conflict—and their costs to the United States, its allies, and the Iraqi people—raise basic issues about the criteria the United States should use in going to war, in conducting wars, and in terminating them.

The Lesson of Strategic Indifference: Knowing When to Play—and When Not to Play—the Counterinsurgency Game

The fighting in Iraq, and the costs and risks imposed in nation building and in fighting a comparatively small insurgent force, illustrates a lesson the United States seems to repeatedly learn only at the end of counterinsurgency campaigns and then forgets by the time it enters into the next conflict. Not every game is worth playing, and sometimes the best way to win is not to play at all.

It is far easier to blunder into a war like the Iraq War than blunder out. It is easy to dismiss the risks of becoming bogged down in local political strife, ignore the risks of counterinsurgency and civil conflict, downplay economic and security risks, and mischaracterize the situation by seeing the military side of intervention as too easy and the political need for action as too great. It is far too easy to exaggerate the threat. It is equally easy to exaggerate the ability of a counterinsurgency campaign to achieve a desired strategic outcome and to ignore the fact that history is often perfectly capable of solving a problem if the United States does not intervene.

Personal anecdotes can lead to dangerous overgeneralizations, but they can also have value. A few years ago, I toured Vietnam and saw from the Vietnamese side their vision of what had happened in that war. There were many tactical and political lessons I drew from that experience, one of which was how thoroughly we ignored

what was happening to Buddhist perceptions and support at the political level while we concentrated on the tactical situation and the politics of Saigon.

The lesson I found most striking, however, was seeing the grand strategic outcome of the war as measured by even the most trivial metrics. I bought a bottle of mineral water in the Hanoi airport and discovered that the front label read "USA Water," while its back label stated that it had been processed through a 14-step process developed by NASA. When I looked at the toy counter, I saw that the bulk of toys consisted of U.S. fighters or fighters with U.S. marking. When I walked over to the news counter, I saw the *Investor's Journal* in Vietnamese and English. This was after being told repeatedly how glad the Vietnamese were that we stayed in Asia as a deterrent to China. We were right in many ways about the domino theory; we just forgot that dominoes could fall in two directions.

Is Counterinsurgency and/or Armed Nation Building the Right Means to the End?

Even if the game *is* worth playing, counterinsurgency and armed nation building may not be the way to play it, particularly if the nation is divided along sectarian, ethnic, or tribal lines in ways where there is no clear "good side" or positive force for change and/or it also involves serious nation-building efforts. Robert Osgood made the point in his writings that when a nation engages in limited war, it should do so for limited purposes. If a nation cannot keep a limited war limited, it should not engage.

Moreover, the United States cannot hope to "fix" many failed or broken nations in the face of massive political and social divisions, economic weakness or collapse, and/or ideological and religious turmoil. The world's worst problems are its most tragic problems, but this does not mean that the United States can decisively change them with affordable amounts of force, aid, and efforts at political reform.

If anything, Iraq is a warning that the United States does not know how to measure and characterize the risks of intervention, is not structured to combine nation building and counterinsurgency on a massive scale, and cannot impose its system and values on another people unless they actually want them. In retrospect, the United States could almost certainly have done far more good spreading the same resources among the nations and peoples where they would have had real benefits and by concentrating on the wars it actually had to fight.

History shows that it is amazingly easy to forget this. There are times when a counterinsurgency campaign is necessary or will be forced on the United States from the outside, but there are many times when the United States has a choice of the means it can use to achieve a given end, and it can choose options other than counterinsurgency.

Containment is one such option. Readers will have to decide for themselves if they had known when the Coalition went into Iraq what they know today, whether they would still have rejected containment as the option. If one considers military involvement in Iran or Syria, the same issues arise as to whether containment and

diplomacy are quite that bad a choice versus expanding a limited war or regime change—at least by force.

When containment is not a substitute for counterinsurgency, the United States must ask whether it should take advantage of military options where it retains advantages insurgents cannot counter: the ability to carry out selective strikes with limited cost. Placing U.S. forces on the ground where they must conduct a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is far more costly and risk-oriented than using limited amounts of force in precision strikes or other carefully limited forms. Sanctions and sustained political pressure often have severe limits, but they too can sometimes achieve the desired result in ways that are less costly than counterinsurgency.

Even when a counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is necessary, using U.S. forces may often be the wrong answer. It is true that the United States will normally consider engaging in counterinsurgency only because the nation it is going to fight is weak or divided. Far too often, however, we seem to commit our forces to combat. In many cases, it will still be better to rely on the local ally and build up its forces, even if this means a higher risk of losing in what is, after all, a limited war.

The right answer in future crises may never be clear, easy to choose, or be the same for different crises and problems. It is also important to emphasize that the lessons of Iraq are scarcely that the United States should not use or improve its counterinsurgency techniques. It is rather a warning that the United States and other powers should engage directly in counterinsurgency only after they assess the costs, risks, ability to achieve the desired end objective, *and alternative means* honestly and in depth.

Facing the "Undrainable Swamp"

There is another lesson that Iraq teaches about counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and nation building. Many analysts have suggested that the key to victory is to remove the causes of terrorism or insurgency, to remove popular support for such movements and give terrorists and/or insurgents' incentives to join civil society—in short, to "drain the swamp."

The theoretical wisdom of such an approach is undeniable, but everything depends upon its feasibility. In the cases of Iraq, Vietnam, and many others, the problem is that the United States could not drain the swamp. It was dealing with a foreign country, different religions and ideologies, and different goals and values. It was perceived by a significant percentage of the people as an invader, occupier, neo-colonial power, "crusader," or simply as selfishly serving its own strategic interests. Language alone presented serious problems, and American public diplomacy was too ethnocentric to be effective.

The United States has consistently shown that it can encourage political, economic, and social reform, but cannot implement it. The people in the nation where the United States engages must take responsibility and find their own leaders, political structures, and methods of governance and paths to economic development.

The United States lacks core competence both inside and outside the government to plan and manage nation building in societies whose economic structures, ability to execute reforms and projects, and perceived values differ significantly from those of the United States. Different cultures, human rights practices, legal methods, and religious practices can be influenced to evolve in ways the United States sees as positive, but there are no universal values, and the United States cannot shape a different nation, culture, or religion.

Demographic, ethnic, and sectarian problems can take a generation or more to fully solve. Decades of economic failure, neglect, and discrimination can take a decade or more to fix. A lack of rule of law, working human rights, pragmatic and experienced leaders, and political parties cannot be fixed by a few years of outside aid and education.

The United States can move only at the pace a nation can accept and must be sensitive to that nation's values and perceptions. In the case of politics, each contingency will be different, and progress will often have to be made at different rates in different areas. A rush to hold elections, and efforts to introduce "instant democracy" and "instant capitalism," cannot produce viable solutions in most cases and will normally do more harm than good.

Political progress requires developing responsible political parties and leaders. It requires effective governance. Local and regional elections may often be needed before an elected central government can be created. Progress in human rights cannot move faster than a given nation and society will accept it, and it is better to make progress at the rate that is possible than pass dramatic laws that fail and provoke a dangerous counterreaction. Creating checks and balances will be critical, and particularly a rule of law that protects individuals as much as possible.

Economic progress and aid cannot transform nations and whole economies quickly or easily. Economic reform cannot be imposed. The key problem in almost every case will be to determine the rate and nature of the aid and change a given nation needs and can absorb, particularly under the conditions like insurgency and civil conflict. In some cases, the most that can be done in the near term is to try to patch the system that already exists and deal with urgent human needs while reducing the pressures that support insurgency and civil conflict.

In almost all cases, outside efforts will fail unless the nation involved has a vested interest in change, assumes the lead and responsibility, and plans a major—if not the leading——role in the use of aid money and how it is planned, spent, and managed. As is the case with politics and governance, the United States should never repeat the arrogance and hubris it showed in Iraq. The United States simply does not have the knowledge and skill base to impose economic restructuring on other countries.

The United States also must not confuse its values with universal human values and assume all nations and societies should evolve to become a copy of America. Culture, social values and norms, and the role of religion in government and society are choices other nations have the right to make. A failure to respect this right, and the pace at which any society can change, not only will make it far harder to defeat

an insurgency and/or end civil conflicts, it will almost certainly produce steadily growing resistance and counterreaction. The nature and speed of reform will largely be dictated by native reformers and local values.

It should be stressed that this in no way means that the United States cannot exert tremendous influence during a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign or that the United States should not seek reform and change. But, the swamp will almost always be undrainable unless a host government and power set of local political movements drive the process. Religious, cultural, and ideological reform must come largely from within. The local populace must see the reason for economic reform and believe in it enough to act. Governance and security must be largely local to be perceived as legitimate. Equally important, if the swamp can be drained, the process will generally take so long that a U.S. counterinsurgency campaign will be lost or won long before the process is completed.

The United States failed to act on these realities in Vietnam. It began the Iraq War by rejecting them and greatly strengthened the insurgency in the process. It wasted critical months before it made effective efforts to help the Iraqis help themselves. More than four years after the "end" of the war, it still has not shaped an aid process focused around the Iraqis, local methods, local needs, and local methods and execution.

In short, the most important part of conducting an effective counterinsurgency strategy may be to honestly assess before starting a campaign what the United States can credibly hope to accomplish in going or not going to war. To make this assessment, U.S. planners must understand that U.S. intervention will normally be effective only if local leaders can help themselves. They must also understand the limits to how much they can change a given nation in the process or a conflict and understand how much time will be needed to deal with many core political, economic, and social problems. In most such cases, the United States will be able only to start the process of reform and to remove the underlying causes that shape a given country's problems.

Engagement Does Not Always Mean Winning

There is a grimmer lesson from the evolution of the insurgency and civil conflict in Iraq. It is a lesson that goes firmly against the American grain, but it is a natural corollary of deciding to engage in limited war. If the course of the political and military struggle shows the United States that it cannot achieve the desired grand strategic outcome, the United States must find ways to terminate a counterinsurgency war. Defeat, withdrawal, and acceptance of an outcome less than victory are never desirable, but they are always acceptable. For all the arguments about prestige, trust, and deterrence, there is no point in pursuing a limited conflict when it becomes more costly than the objective is worth or when the probability of achieving that objective becomes too low.

When the United States lost in Vietnam, it not only lived with the reality, it ultimately did not suffer from it. When the United States failed in Lebanon and Haiti, it

failed at almost no perceptible cost. Exiting Somalia was not without consequences, but they were scarcely critical.

This does not mean that the United States should not stay in Iraq as long as it has a good chance of achieving acceptable objectives at an acceptable cost. But, it does mean that the United States can afford to lose in Iraq, particularly for reasons that are frankly beyond its control and which the world will recognize as such. There is no point in "staying the course" in the face of an all-out Iraqi civil war, a catastrophic breakdown of the political process, or a government coming to power that simply asks the United States to leave. In all three cases, it is not a matter of winning or losing, but instead, facing a situation where conditions no longer exist for staying.

In the future, the United States will need to pay far more attention to the option of declaring that it is fighting a limited war for limited objectives if it really is a limited war. It may well need to fully explain what the limits to its goals and level of engagement are and develop a strategy for implementing, communicating, and exploiting these limits. One mistake is to tell the host government, or the people you are fighting with, that your commitment is open-ended and that you can never leave; the incentive for responsibility vanishes with it. Similarly, if America's leaders tell the American people and the world that a marginal strategic interest is vital, the world will sooner or later believe it. This is dangerous if the United States ever has to leave or lose.

The Critical Value of an Ally and Partner Who Can Govern and Secure the Place Where the United States Is Fighting

Iraq, like so many other serious post–World War II insurgencies, also shows that the risk of failure will be vastly reduced if the United States has a true partner in terms of a local government with broad local support. It also shows that successful counterinsurgency and nation building can be almost impossible if the United States does not have or cannot create a local partner that can take over from U.S. forces and that can govern.

Both Vietnam and Iraq show the United States cannot win an important counterinsurgency campaign alone. The United States will always be dependent on the people in the host country, and usually on local and regional allies. To some extent, it will be dependent on the quality of its operations in the UN in dealing with traditional allies and in diplomacy. If the United States cannot figure out a way to have or create such an ally, and fight under these conditions, a counterinsurgency conflict may well not be worth fighting. This means the United States must do far more than work with local forces. In most cases, it will have to find a way to rely on local leaders and governments to create a viable presence and mix of security and services that can "hold" and "build" in the areas it "liberates."

LESSONS FOR INSURGENCY AND CIVIL CONFLICTS

Regardless of how carefully the United States chooses to engage or not to engage, America's problems in armed nation building will not end with Iraq. There are too

many other flash points in the world, too many other fragile and broken states, too many other cases where asymmetric warfare and counterinsurgency will force the United States to intervene and future needs to be able to fight wars effectively in grand strategic terms.

Focus on the Strategic, Political, and Allied Dimension of the Fighting

Focusing on the military dimension of war is an almost certain path to grand strategic defeat in any serious conflict, and particularly in counterinsurgency in a weak and divided nation. If the United States must engage in counterinsurgency warfare, and sometimes it must, then it needs to plan for both the complexity and the cost of successful conflict termination and ensuring a favorable grand strategic outcome.

If the United States *must* engage, it must prepare for the risk of long-term engagement and escalation and the resources and casualties that will be required. This does not mean, however, that the United States can fix any given country in the face of massive political and social divisions, economic weakness or collapse, and/or ideological and religious turmoil. The world's worst problems are its most tragic problems, but this does not mean that the United States can decisively change them with affordable amounts of force, aid, and efforts at political reform.

If such "long wars" are too costly relative to the value of the objective, the United States must set very clear limits to what it will do based on the limited grand strategic value of the outcome and act upon them—regardless of short-term humanitarian costs. The United States must find ways of winning broad local and regional support; stability operations and nation building are the price of any meaningful counterinsurgency campaign.

Face the Complexity and the Nature of Armed Nation Building

Iraq is an equal warning that the United States must be ready to deal with the full range of complexity and uncertainty in planning in counterinsurgency and nation building. The search for simplicity—and/or a reliance on some predetermined doctrine, tactics, or "key" to success—has led to far more failures in Iraq and other conflicts than successes. The previous chapters have shown the need for ruthless objectivity and to accept the political and military complexity of asymmetric wars, particularly when they involve large-scale efforts at nation building.

Far too often, policy makers, analysts, and intelligence experts approach military or humanitarian intervention by trying to oversimplify the situation, underestimate the risks, and exaggerate the level of control they can achieve over the course of the fighting in determining the ultimate strategic outcome of the war.

Counterinsurgency is only part of this complexity. Improved counterinsurgency forces and capabilities are a high priority. Iraq should have already taught the United States that effective counterinsurgency capabilities are an essential aspect of its

military capabilities, although it now seems likely that it will take the United States at least a decade to fully implement even this aspect of the lessons of Iraq. The force planning and programming efforts involved have only begun to be implemented, and serious questions still exist as to how this aspect of force transformation should be implemented.

Yet, Iraq shows that improved counterinsurgency capability is only part of the lessons the United States must learn about complexity in achieving lasting strategic success. U.S. weakness in counterinsurgency has proved to be far less important than the U.S. lack of core competence in nation building, particularly in the face of civil conflict. The United States lacked the ability to plan and execute the political and economic dimensions of stability operations and still has not developed an effective mix of military and civil capabilities in the field.

The U.S. government is not currently organized or capable of efficiently dealing with a challenge like Iraq. The interagency process, the role of the Department of State in providing civilian advisors, and the broader failure of the U.S. government as a whole to staff the civilian side of nation building has been a major reason why the United States was neither prepared for the consequences of invading nor did it show that it could adapt to the problems it helped to create over time. Ideologues were clearly much of the problem, but it went much deeper. The U.S. government at the broadest level simply did not know what to do and how to do it.

Again, the United States must decide as objectively as possible whether it can *ever* carry out nation building on the scale needed to deal with different cultures with different values and many internal differences. The United States needs to answer this question with the same degree of ruthless self-honesty called for above before it attempts a similar operation. The United States must never again treat failed states as largely "self-healing" as it initially tried to do in Iraq, confuse nation building with counterinsurgency, or try to deny the complexity of nation building and the full range of issues that must be dealt with.

The United States also cannot succeed by focusing on the past. There is a great deal to be learned from past wars if the lessons are carefully chosen and adapted as potential insights into a new conflict rather than transferable paradigms. The Iraq War, however, is not the Afghan War, much less Mao, Malaysia, Vietnam, Northern Ireland, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is nothing to be gained from efforts to revive the same old tactical and technical oversimplifications, without remembering past failures. "Oil spots," "hearts and minds," "Special Forces," walls and barriers, and sensor nets are just a few examples of such efforts that have attempted a "fortune cookies" level of oversimplification and have done far more harm than good.

Each new case is going to be different. It will be complex in new ways and raise new demands and uncertainties. It is pointless to talk about "lessons," as if a few simple tactics and strategies from one conflict could be transferred easily to another. The end result—far too often—will be to rediscover failed slogans and oversimplifications and repeat the past remembering it rather than thinking objectively about the future.

Adequate Planning and Risk Assessment

There is an important corollary of this lesson. The best way to solve a problem is to understand it and do so as objectively and dispassionately as possible. Much has been made of the intelligence failures in assessing Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. These failures pale to insignificance, however, in comparison with the failure of U.S. policy and military planners to accurately assess the overall situation in Iraq before engaging in war and for the risk of insurgency if the United States did not carry out an effective mix of nation-building and stability operations.

This failure was not the responsibility of the intelligence community. It was the responsibility of the president, the vice president, the national security advisor, the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, and the chairman of the joint chiefs. All had the responsibility to bring together policy makers, military planners, intelligence experts, and area experts to provide as accurate a picture of Iraq and the consequences of an invasion as possible. Each failed to exercise that responsibility. The nation's leading policy makers chose to act on a limited and highly ideological view of Iraq that planned for one extremely optimistic definition of success, but not for risk or failure.

There was no real planning for stability operations and nation building, and no realistic assessment of risks, resources, and time. Key policy makers did not want to engage in nation building and chose to believe that removing Saddam Hussein from power would leave the Iraqi government functioning and intact. Plans were made on the basis that significant elements of the Iraqi armed forces would turn to the Coalition's side, remain passive, or put up only token resistance.

No real effort was made to ensure continuity of government or stability and security in Iraq's major cities and throughout the countryside. Decades of serious sectarian and ethnic tension were downplayed or ignored. Actions by Saddam Hussein's regime that had crippled Iraq's economic development since the early years of the Iran-Iraq War—at a time when Iraq had only 17–18 million people—were ignored. Iraq was assumed to be an oil-wealthy country whose economy could quickly recover, if the oil fields were not burned, and transform itself into a modern capitalist structure in the process.

The nation's most senior military commanders compounded these problems by planning for the conventional defeat of the enemy and an early exit from Iraq, by making a deliberate effort to avoid "phase IV" and stability operations. The fact they did so to minimize the strain on the U.S. force posture and the "waste" of U.S. troops on "low-priority" missions played a major role in creating the conditions under which an insurgency could develop and flourish.

The intelligence community and civilian and military area experts may not have predicted the exact nature of the insurgency that followed. Analysis is not prophecy. They did, however, provide ample warning that there was a risk that Iraqi exiles were often failing to provide a balanced or accurate picture, and nation building would be both necessary and extremely difficult. The nation's top policy makers chose to ignore and discourage such warnings as "negative" and "exaggerated" and to plan

for success. They did so having seen the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the sectarian and ethnic problems of Afghanistan.

Top-level policy makers then failed to recognize and admit the scale of the problems they faced as they developed. Their failures were as much failures of reaction as prediction or contingency planning, and failures to accurately assess and react to ongoing events are far less excusable. There were no mysteries involving the scale of the collapse of the Iraqi government and security forces within days of the fall of Saddam Hussein. The reaction was slow, inadequate, and shaped by denial of the seriousness of the problem.

It was more than a year after the fall of Saddam's regime, and at least six months after it became apparent that a serious insurgency was developing, before senior U.S. policy makers seem to have come to grips with the fact they also faced serious civil conflicts. Major resources did not flow into the creation of effective Iraqi forces until the fall of 2004. The U.S. aid effort behaved for nearly a year and a half as if insurgency was truly a small group of diehards or "terrorists." At this writing, in mid-2007 and well over four years after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the United States still seems to have major problems simply in analyzing the problems it faces with objectivity and self-honesty.

This experience is scarcely unique. The United States denied risks and realities of the Vietnam War. European powers initially denied the realities that forced them to end their colonial role. Israel denied the risks and realities of striking deep into Lebanon and seeking to create a Christian-dominated allied state. Russia denied the risks and realities of Chechnya in spite of all the brutal lessons of having denied the risk and realities of Afghanistan.

The failure to learn the need for accurate characterization of the nation and the region where counterinsurgency may—or does—exist seems to be a constant lesson of why nations go to and stay at war. The risks of failing to plan for failure and failing to plan for success are equally significant. Ruthless objectivity is the cheapest solution to preventing and limiting insurgency, and planning and deploying for the full range of stability operations and nation building are essential precautions wherever the stakes are high and the risk is significant.

To succeed, the United States must plan for failure as well as success. It must see the development or escalation of insurgency as a serious risk in any contingency where it is possible and take preventive and ongoing steps to prevent or limit it. This is an essential aspect of war planning and no chairman of the joint chiefs, service chief, or unified and specified commander can be excused for failing to plan and act in this area. Responsibility begins directly at the top, and failures at any other level pale to insignificance by comparison.

Defining "Centers of Gravity"

Iraq has also been a warning about counterinsurgency efforts that try to focus on a single center of gravity, and only part of the problem, rather than the overall mix of issues that drive a conflict in a given nation.

The Baghdad surge strategy, for example, had value to the extent it represented an initial attempt to secure key populated areas and allow national and local governance to become effective and people to feel secure enough to see the insurgents as defeatable. Winning hearts and minds does not mean persuading people to accept constant daily threats and violence. The creation of safe areas is critical. Success in Iraq, and many other campaigns, will depend heavily on finding the right trade-offs between creating safe areas and aggressively pursuing the enemy to prevent the insurgents from creating safe areas of their own and attacking the safe area of the Iraqi government and the Coalition.

At a different level, however, treating one city's security as a center of gravity proved to be just one more failed oversimplification in a long list of such approaches to counterinsurgency. Without the "tribal awakening" in Anbar that led to widespread Sunni resistance to al-Qa'ida at the same time the surge was being put in place, the United States would probably have simply pushed al-Qa'ida out of Baghdad into Diyala and the ring of cites around Baghdad. Iraq is not atypical of many insurgencies in the fact that the key areas where insurgencies are active are also centers of ethnic and sectarian tension and that the insurgency within these areas is also a low-level civil war.

More importantly, Iraq became threatened by civil conflicts that took place throughout the country. It never made sense to try to separate the constant risk of more intense civil conflict from defeating the insurgency. Sectarian and ethnic conflict has intensified in spite of local security efforts, and a concept that ultimately failed in Vietnam is in many ways simply not applicable to Iraq.

This illustrates the fact that conciliation and accommodation cannot wait on security anymore than security can wait on conciliation. Neither option can really be chosen over the other. Worse, in a highly urbanized country—where many major urban areas and their surroundings have mixed populations and the insurgency can exploit serious ethic and sectarian tensions—creating coherent safe areas in major cities can be difficult to impossible.

The New Fog of War and the "Law of Unintended Consequences"

Iraq is yet another illustration of the reality that the "fog of war" manages to evolve at the same rate as technology and tactics. No country can afford to ignore the fact that the course and outcome of any major counterinsurgency or nation-building exercise will be shaped by the "law of unintended consequences."

Wars broaden and allies and enemies evolve in unpredictable ways. Political, social, and economic conditions change inside the zone of conflict in ways the United States and its allies cannot anticipate. Conflict termination proves to be difficult to impossible, or the real-world outcome over time becomes very different from the outcome negotiators thought would happen at the time. The reality proves far more dynamic and uncertain than is predicted going in; the fight requires far more time and resources necessary to accomplish anything than operators plan for. This is particularly true when U.S. involvement will sometimes have

to extend over periods ranging from 5 to 15 years and transition from low-intensity combat to stability operations—operations that focus largely on aid in nation building.

All planning must be based on the understanding that there is no way to eliminate such uncertainties, and mistakes will inevitably be made that go far beyond the ones that are the result of political bias or ideology. There are some who would believe that if only planners and analysts could work without political bias or interference, this would solve most of counterinsurgency problems. In reality, even the best planners and analysts will face major problems regardless of their political and military leadership.

It is frightening to look back at the almost endless reams of analyses, plans, and solutions that people advanced in war colleges, think tanks, and universities during the Vietnam War, El Salvador, and Lebanon. Vietnam may have represented the nadir of American analysis, planning, and objectivity. However, Somalia, the Dayton Peace Accords, and Iraq also represented a failure to analyze the situation properly. Even when the United States analyzed the situation well, it failed to translate this analysis into effective counterinsurgency plans and operational capabilities within the interagency process.

Moreover, time and again, the United States drifted into trying to win in tactical terms rather than focusing on how it could achieve the desired national, regional, and grand strategy outcome. It forgot that it is only the endgame that counts, and not the means. It also forgot that slogans and rhetoric, ideology, and a failure to fully survey and assess ultimately all become a source of self-inflicted wounds or friendly fire. The United States and its allies must accept this as part of the price of going to war.

Economics and Counterinsurgency: Dollars Must Be Used as Effectively as Bullets

The United States needs to be far better prepared to use aid and civic action dollars as well as bullets, and the U.S. military has done better in this area in Iraq than it has in the past. Unfortunately, the history of the insurgency shows that the same cannot be said for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Washington, the other agencies involved in aid activity in Iraq, or for any aspect of the economic planning effort under the Coalition Provisional Authority. The United States ignored the economic and related political and cultural realities of nation building going into Iraq and ignores the economic realities now.

Every independent assessment of the U.S. aid effort warns just how bad the U.S. performance has been in these areas—even in critical areas like the oil industry. The United States has now spent or committed its way through nearly $20 billion and has virtually no self-sustained structural economic change to show for it. Most aid projects spend more money on overhead, contractors, and security than gets to Iraqis in the field. It cannot protect most of its aid projects; for too much of post-

March 2003 Iraqi economic "growth" was illusory and comes from U.S. waste and wartime profiteering.

Self-congratulatory measures of achievement are mindless. Who cares how much money the United States spends or how many buildings it creates, unless this effort goes to the right place and has a lasting impact. The number of school buildings completed is irrelevant unless there are books, teachers, furniture, students, and security, and the buildings go to troubled areas as well as secure ones. Bad or empty buildings leave a legacy of hostility, not success. Empty or low-capacity clinics do not win hearts and minds. Increasing peak power capacity is meaningless unless the right people actually get it.

Long Wars Mean Long Plans and Long Expenditures

The United States announced on February 4, 2006, that its new Quadrennial Defense Review was based on a strategy of long wars and an enduring conflict with terrorists and Islamist extremists. The term has since become politically incorrect. Yet, as the Iraq War and so many similar conflicts have shown, "long wars" are all too real and take the form of long nation building, long stability operations, and long counterinsurgencies. This means they can only be fought with patience, over a period of years, and with sustained investment in terms of U.S. presence, military expenditures, and aid money.

In the case of Iraq, virtually every senior officer and official came to realize by 2005 that a short campaign plan had failed to prepare the United States and the Coalition for a meaningful effort, helped create a serious insurgency, and led to a situation that cost thousands of additional killed and wounded and meant tens of billions of additional dollars were needed to have any chance of success.

Talk of major reductions in U.S. forces moved to year-end 2006, and many experts talked about 2007. Most senior serving officers privately talked about a major advisory and combat support effort through 2010. A "three-month" departure had turned into what threatened to be a decade-long presence *if* the United States and its allies were to succeed. Estimates of total costs in the hundreds of billions of dollars that senior officials in the Bush administration had dismissed in going to war had already become a reality, and the United States was well on its way to a war that would cost at least 3,000 dead and 20,000 wounded.

The message is clear. Effective plans for counterinsurgency and stability operations must include years of effort, not months. Spending plans for military operations and all forms of aid must be shaped accordingly. The American tendency to begin operations with the same plan for immediate success—"simple, quick, and wrong"—needs to be replaced with an honest assessment of the fact that history takes time. The tendency to oversell the ease of operations, demand quick and decisive success, is a natural one for both polic ymakers and senior military officers. It is also a path to failure and defeat. At best, it is likely to be paid for in unnecessary body bags and billions of dollars.

The Limits of Cheerleading and Self-Delusion

Long wars can be won only if domestic political support can be sustained and the American people trust their leaders over time. Short wars may be easy to manage in terms of domestic political constraints and world opinion. They are, however, likely to remain the exception and not the rule.

Counterinsurgency and armed nation building are likely to be wars of U.S. domestic and international political attrition. They will often play out over 5 to 15 years and cannot be fought on the basis of political slogans, official doctrine, ideology, and efforts to spin the situation in the most favorable terms. Politicians, officials, and commanders who explain and justify such wars need to be far more honest about the time scales involved and admit that even when an insurgency is largely over, there may be years of aid and advisory efforts.

The gap between the real-world history of the insurgency described in the preceding analysis and the almost endless U.S. efforts to use the media and politics to "spin" a long and uncertain counterinsurgency campaign into turning points and instant victory has done America, the Bush administration, and the American military great harm. Spin and shallow propaganda loose wars rather than win them. They ultimately discredit a war and the officials and officers who fight it.

Iraq shows that it is critical that an administration honestly prepare the American people, Congress, and its allies for the real nature of the war to be fought. To do so, it must prepare them to sustain the expense and sacrifice through truth, not spin. But there is only so much shallow spin that the American people or Congress will take. It is not a matter of a cynical media or a people who oppose the war; rubbish is rubbish. If the United States "spins" each day with overoptimistic statements and half-truths, it embarks on a process that will sooner or later deprive itself of credibility —both domestically and internationally.

LESSONS FOR WARFIGHTING

Finally, the history of the Iraqi insurgency raises important lessons about warfighting. Some involve the need to fix the U.S. interagency process described earlier. Some involve lessons about how to change the process of force transformation, and some involve lessons about tactics.

Rethinking Force Transformation

The "war after the war" has demonstrated that many of the approaches the United States took to force transformation before it became involved in the Iraq War put far too much emphasis on technology without considering the range of human skills needed for asymmetric warfare and stability operations, and the numbers of war fighters that could be needed on the ground. Counterinsurgency has proven more "human centric" than net centric. Civil-military, area, and language skills have proven to be critical assets in civil, ethnic, and sectarian conflicts.

This does not mean that technology is *not* valuable. For example, sensors, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (IS&R) can have great value in Iraq, just as they did in Vietnam and South Lebanon, but they are anything but "magic bullets." The unattended ground sensor program in Vietnam was once touted as such a magic bullet, but it took less than a year to defeat. Decades later, the Israelis tried using UAVs and unattended ground sensors in southern Lebanon and developed a remarkable amount of statistical evidence and technical data to indicate a more modern approach *would* work. In practices, the Israeli Defense Forces' (IDFs) efforts led Hezbollah to develop more sophisticated tactics and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) at a fraction of the cost of the Israeli detection and defense effort, and Israel was eventually defeated.

Both experiences are warnings about the limits of technology, and they have been reinforced in Iraq by the use of suicide and large-scale vehicle bombings and by the use of IEDs with shaped charges. The United States has been able to dominate tactically, but largely because its resources are so large and those of the insurgents so small. It is far from clear that the United States could have maintained its level of tactical dominance in the face of a much more popular insurgency, and insurgent tactics and technology have certainly proven to be far cheaper and more cost-effective.

At a different level, the history of the fighting in Iraq raises serious questions about the past thinking behind the "revolution in military affairs." The informal distributed networks and "swarming" of the Iraqi insurgents is a serious warning about the limits of technology-based efforts to rely on high-technology formal networks and swarming of the kind Australia chose in its Complex Warfighting doctrine. Efforts to use small, semiautonomous combat elements that can suddenly come together and "swarm" an enemy concentration with a mix of different joint force elements integrated modern IS&R systems and battle management. This may work where the insurgency is small, and where the population is neutral, favorable to the outside force, and/or hostile to the insurgents. The Iraq War shows that it has very acute limits in a more modern state where political and military conditions are far less favorable.[1]

The same is true of the similar British Future Land Operating Concept (FLOC) and the so-called C-DICT (Countering Disorder, Insurgency, Criminality and Terrorism) approach. It is certainly wise to adopt a "system-centric" approach that combines the human element, all elements of joint forces, and tailored IS&R and battle management. But, this is no solution to force density problems or the challenges raised by an insurgency that can still attack both below and above the level of operations that FLOC forces can use. It is a useful tool, but is scarcely an answer to ideological and political warfare where the insurgency operates against different targets at a different pace, and large elements of the population support the insurgency and/or are hostile to the counterinsurgents. Under these conditions, a foreign force with a different culture and religion can use such an approach to aid a local ally, but cannot win on its own.

The U.S. Army and Marine Corps approach to "distributed operations" and their approaches to ''Counterinsurgency,'' ''Small Wars,'' ''a modular army,'' and

"pacification" come up against the same basic problem in a case like Iraq. Like the Australian and British approaches, they can have value under the right conditions. However, they become dangerous and self-defeating the moment tactics and technology become ends in themselves and the dominance of political and cultural factors are ignored. Mao Zedong's description of the people as a sea that insurgents can swim in, indistinguishable from all those around them, is no universal truth, but it is a warning that in many cases, only allied forces and allied governance can prevent the outside force from losing to a vastly cheaper and smaller force simply because the outside force is perceived as a crusader or occupier and the insurgency does not face an effective local government or mix of local forces.

Tactical Lessons

At the tactical level, the history of the insurgency in Iraq provides lessons that have been surprisingly consistent over the more than 40 years from Vietnam to Iraq.

- **First, warfighters must focus relentlessly on the desired outcome of the war and not simply on the battle or overall military situation.** In strategic and grand strategic terms, it does not matter how well the war went last month; it does not matter how the United States is doing tactically. The real question warfighters must ask is whether the United States is actually moving toward a strategic outcome that serves the ultimate interests of the United States? If warfighters do not know, they should not spend the lives of American men and women in the first place.

  The United States, and any military force engaging in counterinsurgency warfare, should teach at every level that stability operations and conflict termination are the responsibility of every field-grade officer (and, for that matter, every civilian). Warfighters need to act on the principle that every tactical operation must have a political context and set of goals. The United States needs to tie its overall campaign plan to a detailed plan for the use of economic aid at every level, from simple bribery to actually seeking major changes in the economy of a given country.

- **Second, warfighters need to understand, as Gen. Rupert Smith has pointed out, and as Iraq has shown, that enemies will make every effort to try to win counterinsurgency conflicts by finding ways to operate below or above the threshold of conventional military superiority.** It is stupid, as some in the U.S. military have done, to call Iraqi insurgents cowards or terrorists because they will not fight on our terms. The same remarkably stupid attitudes appeared in the nineteenth century colonial wars and often cost the battle for those foolish enough to have those attitudes. The Mahdi Army's victories in the Sudan are a good case example.

  The United States has to be able to fight in ways that defeat insurgents and terrorists regardless of how they fight. Insurgents are not cowards for fighting us in any way that results in the highest cost to us and the least cost to them. If they can fight below the U.S. threshold of conventional superiority, then technology is at best a limited supplement to U.S. human skills, military professionalism, and above all, our ability to find ways to strengthen local allies.

  It is far more important, for example, to have effective local forces than more technology. A net-centric strategy is not a substitute for a human-centric one, and, for

that matter, a human-centric strategy is not a substitute for competent people down at the battalion level. Systems do not win. Technology does not win.

- **Third, warfighters and their political leaders need to acknowledge that enemies can fight above the threshold of U.S. conventional ability, not just beneath it.** The character of America's political system, culture, and values is not the answer to winning the political and ideological dimension of many counterinsurgency campaigns. There is no reason Americans should think *they* can win an ideological struggle over the future of Islam and/or the Arab world. Our Muslim and Arab allies, in contrast, may well be able to win this struggle, particularly if the United States works with them and not against them.

  U.S. public diplomacy and political actions can have a major impact in aiding counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. But, Iraq shows that the local, cultural, ethnic, religious, and political issues have to be fought out in such wars largely by our allies on the ground and other Islamic states. The United States can help, but cannot win, or dominate, the battle for hearts and minds. Moreover, only regional allies with the right religion, culture, and legitimacy can cope with the growing ability of ideologically driven opponents to find the fault lines that can divide us from local allies by creating increased ethnic and sectarian tensions.

- **Fourth, although the United States does need to improve its counterinsurgency technology, it cannot win with "toys."** Technology is a tool and not a solution. Israeli technology failed in Lebanon as U.S. technology did in Vietnam, and some of the same IED systems that helped defeat Israel have now emerged in Iraq: twin infrared sensors, shaped charges, radio-controlled devices, and foam painted to look like rocks. Like Israel, the United States can use technical means to defeat many IEDs, but not enough. Moreover, it is possible that the total cost of every insurgent IED to date is still lower than the cost of one AH-1S Cobra helicopter that went down over Iraq.

- **Fifth, the force must have the right balance of numbers and expertise.** Many have argued since the beginning of the Iraq War that the Coalition needed far more manpower for stability operations. This is a solution to some problems, where a simple security presence will deter terrorism and the growth of an insurgency. It is, also, however, a dangerous illusion in other cases. Large numbers of forces that will never have the right language and area skills with any serious proficiency, which lack the necessary specialist training, and have a different culture and religion will simply compound local resentments and the feeling the United States or a U.S.–led force is at best an occupier and at worst an enemy. "Stabilizers" can easily become targets, and deployed large numbers of forces means more incidents with the local population, more problems in getting the host country to take responsibility, the growth of more rear-area military bureaucracy, and dealing with a large number of no- or little-purpose troops that need to be protected.

  At the same time, too few ordinary troops can be equally dangerous, particularly in establishing initial security and presence. Small elites cannot do large or routine jobs. There must be enough military and civilians in country to establish basic security. There is no point in wasting Special Forces, translators, military police, counterinsurgency/counterterrorism experts, civil-military experts, and other scarce elite forces in "presence" and "support" missions.

  Finding the right balance will be difficult and case specific and must deal with contingency risks and not simply the outcome policy makers and military planners

want. The key to success is to fit the force to the case, and not to the desire or the doctrine.

- **Sixth, the best "force multiplier" will be effective allies and interoperability with a true partner.** If it is true that the United States can win most counterinsurgency campaigns if it creates strong allies, the United States must act decisively on this principle. U.S. victories will often be only a means to this end. The real victories come when the United States has allied troops that can operate against insurgents in the field and a friendly government to carry out nation building and civil action activities at the same time. The United States really begins to win when it can find ways to match the military, political, economic, and governance dimensions.

  Creating a real partnership with allies also means respect; it does not mean creating proxies or tools. It means recognizing that creating the conditions for effective governance and police are as important as the military. So is the creation of effective ministries. Iraq shows all too clearly that this kind of warfare, if you focus on the Ministry of Defense and ignore the Ministry of Interior or the Ministry of Finance, just does not work.

  In most places, the actual counterinsurgency battle is local and as dependent on police and effective governance as effective military forces. In hyperurbanized areas, which represent many of the places where we fight, the city is the key, at least as much as the national government. And, incidentally, Iraq has already shown time after time that it is difficult to sustain any victory without a lasting presence by local police and government offices.

- **Seventh, political legitimacy in counterinsurgency is measured in local terms and not in terms of American ideology.** Effective warfighting means the United States must recognize something about regional allies that goes against its present emphasis on "democracy." In most of the world, "legitimacy" has little to do with governments being elected and a great deal to do with governments being popular.

  By all means, hold elections when they do more good than harm. But, bringing the people security, the rule of law, human rights, and effective governance is far more important. In many cases, elections may be disruptive or bring people to power that are more of a problem than a solution. This is particularly true if elections come without the preconditions of mature political parties, economic stability a firm rule of law, and checks and balances. In most cases, the United States and its allies will still need to worry about the people who do not win—people, ethnicities, and sects who will not have human rights protection. (If anyone thinks there is a correlation between democracy and human rights, congratulations; that person got through college without ever reading Thucydides. The Melian Dialogue is the historical rule, not the exception.)

- **Eighth, the United States needs to have a functional interagency process and partner our military with effective civilian counterparts.** Iraq has shown that political leaders and senior military cannot afford to bypass the system, or to lack support from the civilian agencies that must do their part from the outset. The United States needs to begin by deciding on the team it needs to go to war and then make that team work. It is one of the oddities historically that Robert McNamara got his largest increase in U.S. troops deployed to Vietnam by bypassing the interagency process. The Bush administration began by going through an interagency process before the war, but largely chose to ignore it after January 2003.

This is the wrong approach. Counterinsurgency wars are as much political and economic as military. They require political action, aid in governance, economic development, and attention to the ideological and political dimensions. The United States can succeed here only if the interagency process can work.

At another level, the United States needs civilian risk-takers. It needs a counterpart to the military in the field. There is no point in supporting the staffing of more interagency coordination bodies in Washington unless their primary function is to put serious resources into the field. The United States is not going to win anything by having better interagency coordination, and more meetings, unless the end result is to put the right mix of people and resources out in the countryside where the fighting takes place.

The United States needs to put a firm end to the kind of mentality that overstaffs the Department of State and the intelligence community in Washington and does not require career civilians to take risks in the field. Foreign Service officers should not be promoted, in fact, should be selected out, unless they are willing to take risks. The United States can get all of the risk-takers it wants. There already is a flood of applications from qualified people. It can also ensure continuity and expertise by drawing on the brave group of people already in Iraq and Afghanistan—a remarkable number of who are already contract employees—and giving them career status.

In the process, the United States also needs to "civilianize" some aspects of its military. It needs to improve both its area and language skills, create the added specialized forces it needs for stability and nation-building operations, and rethink tour length for military members who work in critical positions and with allied forces. Personal relationships are absolutely critical in the countries where the United States is most likely to fight counterinsurgency wars. So is area expertise and continuity in intelligence.

Counterinsurgency needs a core of military members and civilians who will accept 18- to 24-month tours in key slots. The problem today is often that the selection system does not focus on the best person but rather on external personnel and career-planning considerations. Moreover, it fails to recognize that those who take such additional risks should be paid for it in full and be given different leave policies and promotion incentives. Today, a soldier who is only a battalion commander is *only* a battalion commander. The key officers are those with area and counterinsurgency skills that go beyond the combat unit level. Those officers need to have more diverse skills, deal adequately with the broader dimension of war, and stay long enough to be fully effective.

Finally, one key lesson is the need for adequate numbers of personnel and boots on the ground. "Human-centric" warfare does not mean "supersoldiers" or superintelligence officers. Military forces—and the civilian support needed for stability operations, nation building, and counterinsurgency—do need better training in the nature of such operations, local languages, and local cultures. *But,* military forces and civilians that are outstanding are a dangerous illusion. Effective operations require both adequate force quality and adequate force quantity, and the understanding that most people are, by definition, "average." Elites are an essential part of military operations, but only a part.

This demand for elites and superintelligence officers is a particular problem for warfighting intelligence, given the limits of today's technical systems and means. It

is also a problem because Iraq shows that developing effective U.S.–led and organized human intelligence (HUMINT) may often be impossible.

It is true that better intelligence analysis and HUMINT are critical. But, there will be many times in the future where the United States will also have to go into counterinsurgency campaigns without being able to put qualified Americans in the field quickly enough to recruit effective agents and develop effective HUMINT on its own. The United States will need an effective local partner in most serious cases of both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Having allied countries, allied forces, or allied elements develop effective HUMINT will be a critical answer to U.S. shortcomings.

Notes

CHAPTER 1

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CHAPTER 14

1. It should be noted that charges that the United States somehow attempts to conceal such data are totally false. These figures are updated daily for media use by the Department of Defense and are available to any user at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/, along with data on the casualties in the Afghan conflict.

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> The count includes civilian deaths caused by coalition military action and by military or paramilitary responses to the coalition presence (e.g. insurgent and terrorist attacks). It also includes excess civilian deaths caused by criminal action resulting from the breakdown in law and order that followed the coalition invasion. Results and totals are continually updated and made immediately available here and on various IBC web counters which may be freely displayed on any website or homepage, where they are automatically updated without further intervention. Casualty figures are derived from a comprehensive survey of online media reports from recognized sources. Where these sources report differing figures, the range (a minimum and a maximum) is given. This method is also used to deal with any residual uncertainty about the civilian or non-combatant status of the dead. All results are independently reviewed and error-checked by at least three members of the Iraq Body Count project team before publication.

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A new study has been released by the Lancet medical journal estimating over 650,000 excess deaths in Iraq. The Iraqi mortality estimates published in the Lancet in October 2006 imply, among other things, that:

- On average, a thousand Iraqis have been violently killed every single day in the first half of 2006, with less than a tenth of them being noticed by any public surveillance mechanisms;
- Some 800,000 or more Iraqis suffered blast wounds and other serious conflict-related injuries in the past two years, but less than a tenth of them received any kind of hospital treatment;
- Over 7% of the entire adult male population of Iraq has already been killed in violence, with no less than 10% in the worst affected areas covering most of central Iraq;
- Half a million death certificates were received by families which were never officially recorded as having been issued;

The Coalition has killed far more Iraqis in the last year than in earlier years containing the initial massive "Shock and Awe" invasion and the major assaults on Falluja.

If these assertions are true, they further imply:

- incompetence and/or fraud on a truly massive scale by Iraqi officials in hospitals and ministries, on a local, regional and national level, perfectly coordinated from the moment the occupation began;
- bizarre and self-destructive behaviour on the part of all but a small minority of 800,000 injured, mostly non-combatant, Iraqis;
- the utter failure of local or external agencies to notice and respond to a decimation of the adult male population in key urban areas;
- an abject failure of the media, Iraqi as well as international, to observe that Coalition-caused events of the scale they reported during the three-week invasion in 2003 have been occurring every month for over a year.

In the light of such extreme and improbable implications, a rational alternative conclusion to be considered is that the authors have drawn conclusions from unrepresentative data. In addition, totals of the magnitude generated by this study are unnecessary to brand the invasion and occupation of Iraq a human and strategic tragedy.

The introduction to this analysis also notes that,

There has been enormous interest and debate over the newly published Lancet Iraqi mortality estimate of 655,000 excess deaths since the invasion, 601,000 of them from violence (and including combatants with civilians). Even the latter estimate is some 12

times larger than the IBC count of violent civilian deaths reported in the international news media, which stands at something under 50,000 for the same period (although the IBC figure for this period is likely to considerably increase with the addition of as yet unprocessed data). The new Lancet estimate is also almost the same degree higher than any official records from Iraq. This contrast has provoked numerous requests for comment, and these are our first observations.

The researchers, and in particular their Iraqi colleagues who carried out the survey, should be commended for undertaking it under dangerous circumstances and with minimal resources. Efforts like theirs have consistently highlighted that much more could be done by official bodies, such as the US and UK governments, to assess the human suffering that has resulted from the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

However, our view is that there is considerable cause for scepticism regarding the estimates in the latest study, not least because of a very different conclusion reached by another random household survey, the ILCS, using a comparable method but a considerably better-distributed and much larger sample. This latter study gave a much lower estimate for violent deaths up until April 2004, despite that period being associated with the smallest number of observed deaths in the latest Lancet study.

Additionally, claims that the two Lancet studies confirm each other's estimates are overstated. Both the violent and non-violent post-invasion death estimates are actually quite different in the two studies.

What emerges most clearly from this study is that a multi-methodological approach and much better resourced work is required. Substantially more deaths have occurred than have been recorded so far, but their number still remains highly uncertain.

We also take the view that far more recognition should be accorded the many other courageous people in Iraq, be they Iraqi or international journalists, hospital, morgue, and other officials, or relief workers, who are endeavouring to keep the world informed on the country's plight. Far too many have had to pay the highest possible price for their efforts. Ignorance of this catastrophic war would be far less endemic if their day-by-day contribution were consistently given the exposure it merits. The daily toll on civilian lives resulting from the Iraq war should be front-page news in the countries that instigated it, not inside-page news.

In October 2004 the Lancet published a random cluster sample survey estimating that 98,000 Iraqis had died as a result of the invasion up to that point (an 18-month period), and that 57,600 of these deaths were from violence. The October 2006 study comes from the same research team and provides an estimate for the 40-month period from March 2003 to June 2006 of 655,000 excess deaths, 601,000 of them from violence. The data presented do not distinguish between civilian and combatant deaths. Since IBC's work is confined to violent civilian deaths, we make no further comment on Lancet's non-violent death estimates.

The Lancet researchers visited 47 neighbourhoods and conducted interviews in 40 adjoining households in each neighbourhood. About 1,800 households containing 12,000 Iraqis were surveyed. These households reported a total of 302 violent deaths, each of which has been multiplied by two thousand to provide an estimate of how many of Iraq's estimated 26,000,000 population would have died if this proportion of deaths were representative of the country as a whole.

The study's central estimate of 601,000 violent deaths is exceptionally high. Even its lower bound 95% confidence interval of 426,000 violent deaths is shockingly large. If

numbers of this magnitude are anywhere near the truth, then they reveal a disaster far greater than most could have conceived, and one which appears inconsistent with a considerable amount of other information that has emerged over the last three and a half years. Before any firm conclusions are drawn on the basis of this study, five important (and extremely anomalous) implications of the data presented by the Lancet authors require examination.

13. Iraq Body Count notes this is likely:

We corroborate deaths from multiple sources. This ensures a high degree of accuracy and witness verification. The accuracy of our individual entries has rarely been challenged. Indeed, no-one has credibly claimed that we have compiled deaths which have not happened.

Recent public debate has rather focused on the number of deaths we don't record, and how much of an undercount that might be. Our own view is that the current death toll could be around twice the numbers recorded by IBC and the various official sources in Iraq. We do not think it could possibly be 10 times higher.

Those who suggest that the IBC data-base is likely to contain only a tiny minority of actual deaths generally argue three things. First, they say that IBC only records deaths in areas where Western journalists are present; second they propose that there have been at least seven credible studies which suggest up to ten times as many deaths as we have recorded; and third they assert that an alternate media world exists containing a professional Arab-language press which continually reports far more deaths than the sources we monitor in English.

The third criticism appears to be based on a misunderstanding of what is actually available in the English language. Our sources include not only the growing number of Middle Eastern and Iraqi sources that publish in English as well as Arabic, but also daily and comprehensive English translations of Arabic media in Iraq provided by subscription-only services—including transcriptions of TV reports detailing security incidents.

Monitoring agencies such as the BBC provide daily summaries of individual Iraqi newspaper stories. . . We store and analyse all this, each and every day. No doubt there are reports we have missed despite our best efforts, but no-one has provided evidence of any major discrepancy. It is a complete fantasy to postulate an alternate media universe busily reporting vast numbers of deaths missed by any of the Western media. If there are missed deaths, they are mainly deaths missed by all media.

We now turn directly to difficulties with the Lancet "600,000" estimate.

There are two questions. First, how plausible is it that 600,000 is the best estimate of violent deaths since March 2003. Second, if this is not a plausible estimate—what factors could account for the over-estimate. In October 2006, we published a paper on our website which outlines five problematic implications of accepting 600,000 as a possible violent death toll [PBS Newshour, 11 Oct 2006].

For reasons of time I can only briefly mention two.

Problem One involves death certificates.

Roberts and colleagues report that "92% of households had death certificates for deaths they reported." This would imply that about 550,000 death certificates were issued by local health professionals. Yet figures compiled by the Iraqi Ministry of Health

and the Baghdad Morgue identified at most 50,000 violent deaths. That would mean that nine out of ten certificates were never officially recorded as having been issued.

Loss of records on the scale suggested by the Lancet study could only be accounted for by one of two explanations. The first requires there to have been an almost total breakdown of the national bureaucratic recording system right across the country from day one of the occupation to today. And this breakdown would have to have occurred at the same time as local bureaucratic systems functioned almost perfectly, capturing and issuing certificates for almost all of the estimated 600,000 violent deaths. The second explanation would require a perfectly organised and amazingly successful conspiracy, again from day one of the occupation to today, to massively suppress and consistently distort official statistics. What evidence is available from direct investigations at the local level suggest that local and national data are pretty consistent with one another.

If either of these two explanations were correct, the Iraqi hospitals at the local level who issued all these supposed death certificates must know about these deaths and have records of them, even if nobody else does. And if the official national figures were so wildly low as implied by this Lancet study, any hospital in Iraq should be able to see, and to prove, that they have recorded far more violent deaths—and at every stage of the conflict—than the national figures would suggest. Yet none have noticed or come forward with this evidence sitting under their own noses.

Problem 2 involves injuries.

Knowing what we do about the ratio of injured to killed in conflict, it is inevitable that more, possibly far more, were seriously injured than were killed. The Ministry of Health reported just under 60,000 people as being treated for injuries in hospitals during the two year period from mid 2004 to mid 2006. Yet, even on the most conservative calculations, Lancet-estimated death totals would imply around 800,000 injuries in that same two year period.

That would imply that over 700,000 Iraqis neither sought nor received any treatment for war-related injuries during that two-year period, and that not a single official, journalist, or NGO, has picked up this fact.

Implausibilities of this sort mount up. When they are put together with a range of sources which suggest a much lower death total than that suggested by the Lancet study, then we have to consider seriously that one or more aspects of the Lancet study's methodology or data collection has distorted its final estimate of violent deaths very significantly upwards.

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CHAPTER 15

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